# Isaac Asimov's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE®

1.75 MID-DECEMBER 1983

**SPEECH SOUNDS**
OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

NORMAN SPINRAD

LEIGH KENNEDY

JACK C. HALDEMAN II

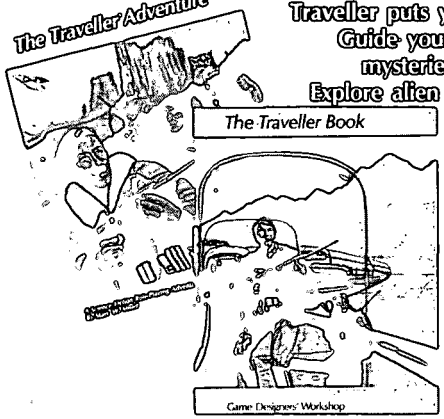
IAN WATSON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Put yourself in the story!

## TRAVELLER®

*Science-Fiction Adventure in the Far Future*




Traveller puts you in the middle of the action! Guide your favorite character through the mysteries and dangers of the far future. Explore alien worlds, puzzle out the enigmas of ancient civilizations, conduct complicated confidence scams, smuggle, build empires, lead revolutions, wage interstellar war . . . the list of science fiction role-playing adventures is as unlimited as your own imagination.

### The Traveller Book

Complete rules, background, advice for players and referees, scenarios, and two short adventures.

### The Traveller Adventure

A series of interwoven scenarios and adventures among the worlds of the Spinward Marches.

There are more than forty books, boxed sets, modules, supplements, adventures, and games for Traveller, with new material appearing regularly. Traveller is available from better book, game, and hobby retailers around the world.

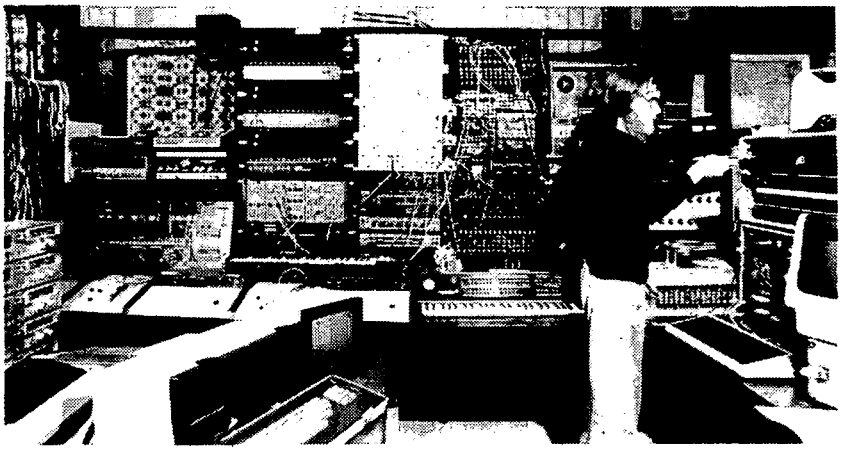
## Game Designers' Workshop

P.O. Box 1646, Bloomington, Illinois 61701

*Free catalog on request.*


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# EXPLORE THE WORLDS



one of the world's largest private computer music laboratories.

# OF COMPUTER MUSIC

Did you think computer music had to be academic and sterile or sound like video game bleeps? THINK AGAIN. Think about full bodied choral and orchestral music or arabic sounding heavy rock, or uncannily realistic East Indian music or Japanese flute themes. Think about audio universes you can't even begin to imagine, derived from a combination of synthesis and digitization of real sounds, such as voices, instruments, whales and much more. In fact think about all the music of mankind through the ages blended into textures and compositions never before possible, all rendered 100% under program control. THINK SYNTHESIS IN ITS BROADEST MEANING. THINK MACROFUSION®.

**Send $3 for half hour sampler cassette and descriptive color catalog for 12 other cassettes.**

MACROFUSION® COMPUTER MUSIC
40879 Hwy 41 Suite 12-a
Oakhurst, CA 93644

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New From TSR
# EXTRA EXTRA
Brotherly Love Bulletin
★★★★★ METRO FINAL

©1982 TSR Hobbies, Inc. June 20, 1982 Latest Edition From TSR

# Organized Crime Stirs Public Rage

## Solution Discovered... GANGBUSTERS™ Game Plays Major Role.

*Lakefront City, USA*

Citizens are finding GANGBUSTERS™ game to be their best means to create strategies to crush crime in the streets.

It appears that TSR Hobbies has created another outstanding role-playing game...one that may very well equal the success of their world-famous DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

**For FREE catalog of games and accessories write to:**

**TSR Hobbies, Inc.**
**POB 756**
**Dept. 170-123 AZ11**
**Lake Geneva, WI**
**53147**

**In the UK:**
**TSR Hobbies, (UK) Ltd.**
**The Mill Rathmore Rd.**
**Cambridge, England**
**CB1 4AD**

**Read all about it in the new GANGBUSTERS™ Roaring Twenties Role-Playing Game.**

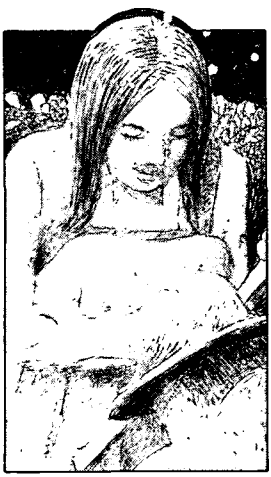
TSR™ The Game Wizards
© 1980 TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and GANGBUSTERS are trademarks owned by TSR Hobbies, In
©1982 TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

111

130



68

# Isaac ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

Vol. 7 No. 13 (whole no. 73)
Mid-December 1983
Next issue on sale
December 20, 1983

**Novelettes**

42 Reasonable Doubt — Fred Singer
68 The Power of the Press — Richard Kearns
130 Street Meat — Norman Spinrad

**Short Stories**

22 The Castrati of Womensa — Martin Gardner
26 Speech Sounds — Octavia E. Butler
92 Her Furry Face — Leigh Kennedy
111 My Crazy Father Who Scares All the Women Away — Jack C. Haldeman II
121 Cruising — Ian Watson

**Departments**

6 Editorial: My Name — Isaac Asimov
11 Letters
15 Mooney's Module — Gerry Mooney
19 Gaming — Dana Lombardy
24 IAsfm Crossword Puzzle: Magical Mystery Tour — Merl H. Reagle
167 On Books — Baird Searles
178 The SF Conventional Calendar — Erwin S. Strauss

Cover art by Steven Hunt

**Joel Davis: President & Publisher Isaac Asimov: Editorial Director Shawna McCarthy: Editor**

Published 13 times a year by Davis Publications, Inc. at $1.75 a copy; annual subscription of thirteen issues $19.50 in the United States and U.S. possessions; in other countries $22.75, payable in advance in U.S. funds. Address for subscriptions and all other correspondence about them, P.O. Box 1993, Marion OH 43305. Address for all editorial matters; Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10017. Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine ® is the registered trademark of Davis Publications, Inc. © 1983 by Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A. Protection secured under the Universal and Pan American Copyright Conventions. Reproduction or use of editorial or pictorial content in any manner without express permission is prohibited. All submissions must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, the publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Second class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario; second class pending. POSTMASTER: send form 3570 to IAsfm, Box 1933, Marion OH 43306. In Canada return to 625 Monmouth Rd. Windsor Ontario N8Y3L1. ISSN 0162-2188.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# EDITORIAL

by Isaac Asimov

## MY NAME

I received a letter, recently, in which my name was mentioned at five separate points, and the name of the magazine at a sixth point. In all six places, my name was misspelled.

This is, alas, a common occurrence, but I have never really learned to adjust myself to it. I remain absurdly sensitive to such misspellings, and invariably (when I can) indicate my displeasure as politely as possible.

Oddly enough, it never occurred to me until this letter was received that misspelling my name means, automatically, the misspelling of the magazine's name as well. Whether you refer to the magazine in full as *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, or, more economically, as *Asimov's*, questions concerning spelling and pronunciation remain. It occurs to me, then, that if I take up my name in full detail, the matter will be laid to rest, at least as far as the readers of the magazine are concerned. And if, later on, the question arises again, I can always refer to this editorial as reference.

The name "Isaac" is, of Biblical origin, and comes from a Hebrew word meaning "laughter." The use of the name in the Bible is explained in three different places. When Abraham was 99 years old, and without a son by his chief wife, Sarah, God promised that he would have a son by her. "Then Abraham . . . laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" (Genesis 17:17).

On another occasion, the promise being repeated, Sarah overheard the discussion. The result was that ". . . Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Genesis 18:12).

Both laughs were laughs of disbelief, but when the child was born, it became a laugh of pleasure: "And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." (Genesis 21:6).



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So the child was named Isaac. In Hebrew, it is "Itzhak," where the "h" represents the guttural sound of the German "ch."

When the Bible was translated into Greek in the third century B.C. (its first translation) Itzhak became Isaak (in Greek letters, of course). The "tzh" combination was an uncomfortable one for Greek speakers and they substituted "saa" as a softer equivalent. Since Latin does not use a "k" in its words, the name because "Isaac" in Latin translations of the Bible. Latin does not have the guttural "ch" and though they kept the double "a," its significance was lost.

In modern languages, it is Isaak in German, and Isaac in French, and in both cases is pronounced "ee-zak" (not too far from the Hebrew), with the Germans accenting the first syllable and the French the second. In English, which followed the French and Latin spelling, rather than the German and Greek, the initial "i" was given the long pronunciation and the name is "*eye*zik," with the accent on the first syllable.

Under the circumstances, it is rather natural to have people who are not familiar with the name replace the "c" with a "k" or "ck," or the "s" with a "z." Since the "aa" combination is very unusual in English words it is also common to omit one of them. That is even standard in some languages. The name is "Izaak" in Dutch, and "Isak" in Danish. (A famous Danish writer has as her pseudonym, "Isak Dinesen.") For that matter, it is "Isacco" in Italian.

The misspelling I find least forgivable (and most common), however, comes about when people dimly remember that there is a double letter in the name but are unwilling to accept the possibility of an "aa" combination. They, therefore, spell it "Issac." In no language that I know of is there a double "s" in the name, and I consider it an abomination.

My own possession of the name came about through the Jewish custom of naming a child for a member of the family who is no longer alive. In this way, I suppose, the dead relative is honored and memorialized. In any case, my mother's father, already dead at the time I was born, had been an Isaac, and so I received the name.

As for my second name, that is of more recent origin. Under Tsar Nicholas I, a century and a half ago, the Jews of the Russian Empire were required to adopt family names. Until then, they had called themselves in Biblical fashion as "Joshua, son of Nun", so that I would have been "Isaac, son of Judah."

The family names chosen were of different types of origin. For instance, the word for "winter" in Russian, is "zima." Winter-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grain (the kind that is sown in the fall, so that after winter-dormancy, it ripens the following spring and summer) is therefore called "azimy."

My ancestor in the time of Tsar Nicholas was a merchant who dealt in winter grain, among other things, so he was probably called Judah Azimy (Judah, the winter-grain dealer) in any case, and he adopted that as his official surname, to be used on documents.

Eventually, this was modified to Azimov, in order to get the Russian ending and give it the sound of a higher social status.

That name was, of course, spelled in the Cyrillic alphabet that is used in Russian, and my father when the family arrived in the United States was faced with the necessity of spelling it in the Latin alphabet which English uses. My father was not familiar with the Latin alphabet but knew that the sewing machine in his house in Russia had the word "Singer" on it, in the Latin alphabet, and that this was pronounced (German-fashion) as "Zinger." He assumed, therefore, that "s" had the "z" pronunciation and he spelled his name "Asimov." It has so remained ever since. The "s," however, is still pronounced "z."

For some reason, "Asimov" seems to represent an insoluble mystery to many people as far

**ISAAC ASIMOV:**
Editorial Director
**SHAWNA McCARTHY:**
Editor
**SHEILA WILLIAMS:**
Assistant Editor
**RALPH RUBINO:**
Corporate Art Director
**GERRY HAWKINS:**
Associate Art Director
**TERRI CZECZKO:**
Art Editor
**MARIANNE WELDON:**
Associate Designer
**CARL BARTEE:**
Director of Manufacturing
**CAROLE DIXON:**
Production Manager
**IRIS TEMPLE:**
Director, Subsidiary Rights
**BARBARA BAZYN:**
Manager, Contracts & Permissions
**MICHAEL DILLON:**
Circulation Director, Retail Marketing
**PAUL PEARSON:**
Newsstand Operations Manager
**ROBERT PATTERSON:**
Circulation Manager
**ROSE WAYNER:**
Classified Ad Director
**WILLIAM F. BATTISTA:**
Advertising Director

ADVERTISING OFFICES
NEW YORK
(212) 557-9100

CHICAGO
(312) 346-0712

LOS ANGELES
(213) 795-3114

**JOEL DAVIS**
President and Publisher

**LEONARD F. PINTO**
Vice President
&
General Manager

**CAROLE SINCLAIR**
Vice President
Marketing-Editorial

**LEONARD H. HABAS**
Vice President
Circulation

**FRED EDINGER**
Vice President
Finance

Please do not send us your manuscript until you've gotten a copy of our discription of manuscript format and story needs. To obtain this, send us a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope (what stationery stores call a number 10 envelope), and a note requesting this information, the address for this and for all editorial correspondence is *IAsfm*, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10017. While we're always looking for new writers, please, in the interest of time-saving, find out what we're looking for, and how to prepare it, before submitting your story.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as its pronunciation is concerned. In Russian, the name is pronounced with the accent on the second syllable: "ah-*zee*muv." In English, however, it is the *first* syllable that is stressed, and it becomes "*a*zih-mov."

In fact, the easiest way of getting the correct pronunciation is to say the three simple English words, "as," "him," and "of," one after the other and drop the "h," cockney-fashion, in the second word. "As," " 'im," "of." That's it!

I can tolerate the substitution of a "z" for an "s" in my surname. After all, that is the way it should be, really (but isn't). I can even tolerate an "f" or "ff" in place of the "v"; but that's all.

The German "w" is pronounced "v" so that when Russian names are transliterated into German, they routinely receive an "ow" or "owsky" ending. That's why the name of the composer, Chaikovsky, is commonly written Tschaikowsky, and pronounced by some Americans as though there were a cow somewhere in its middle. Under such conditions, my name would be "Asimow" and, indeed, there are, in California, some very distant relatives of mine who have that as their surname. This I would seriously object to in my own case, because it changes the pronunciation Tschaikowsky-fashion, and I do not want that to happen.

As in the case of my first name, so in the case of my surname, the most offensive misspelling is the use of a double "s."

One odd point is this. For some reason, "Asimov" seems to evade some American tongues altogether. They cannot say it, but manage to get out the word "Asminov" instead. I simply can't understand it. It seems to me that "Asminov" is far more difficult to say than "Asimov" but so many people say the former that I feel there must be some legitimate linguistic reason for it, and it amuses me too much to allow me to get very angry.

I can tell you numerous tales of odd misspellings and pronunciations, but I will satisfy myself with only two.

The first was an occasion, about twenty years ago, when I lectured at a Jewish temple in Philadelphia. As I walked in, I passed a huge poster announcing the glad tidings of my talk, and my first name was spelled Issac. I had the pleasure of asking the rabbi, gently, if he ever read the Bible in English. He produced one indignantly, and I turned to an appropriate passage, indicated it, pointed to the poster, and watched him look appropriately horrified.

Better than that, though, was the occasion in 1977, when I



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

received a Nebula for my novelette, *The Bicentennial Man*, from the Science Fiction Writers of America.

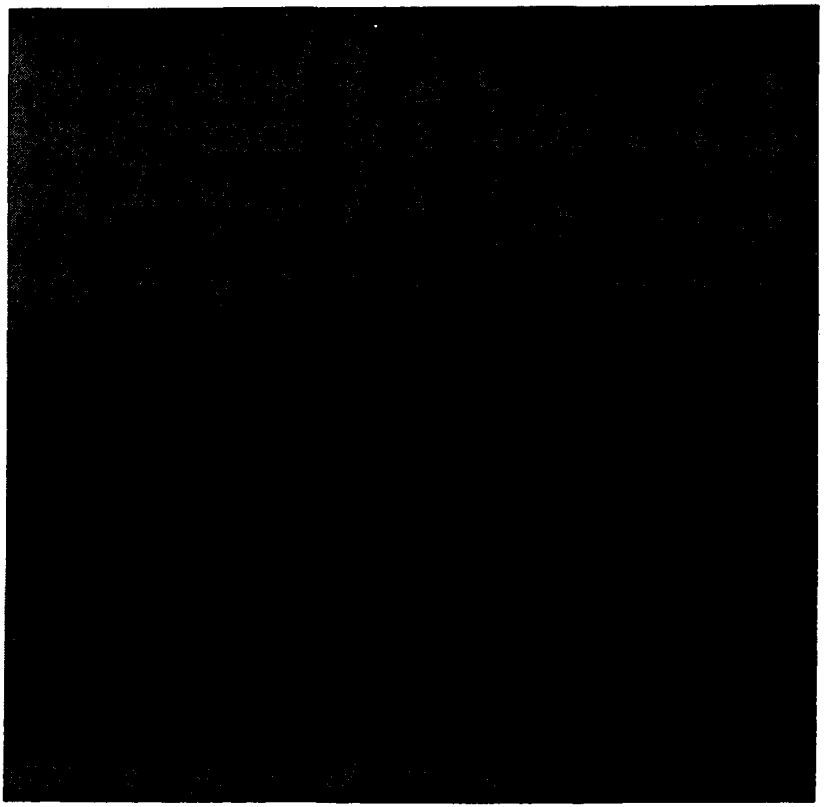
One would certainly expect that the various SFWA officials, whatever else they knew or did not know, would know how to spell one of the most familiar names in the science fiction lexicon. Of course, one would not expect that these officials would personally carve my name on the plastic award, but it is not asking too much that they give the illiterate mechanic the appropriate instructions, and that they proofread the results.

Ha! I received my Nebula with my name upon it as "Issac Asmimov."

They offered to replace it, but I refused. I felt that they would spell it even worse the second time.

So there's the story; and now—all together:

ISAAC ASIMOV (*eye*zick-*az*-ih-mov). ●





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# LETTERS

Dear Editor:

It would appear that about every thirty years Martin Gardner and I engage in a brief dialogue. His current comment on me in the Viewpoint section of the July 1983 issue, is like the first one: an attack, intended to destroy. Thirty years ago, I misread the way he stated what he had to say as a sign of deep anger in him. Now, I would deduce that he is that equally common type: a conformist; an individual who accepts the authoritarian point of view. He doesn't have to be angry; he has the law on his side.

*Point One*: His attack seems to be principally against my association with dianetics. So let me bring him up to date: I completed my study of human nature by way of dianetics, and about 2000 persons who took the courses I gave, early in the 1960s. I still accept the ideas as valid. It should be interesting to Mr. Gardner that Hubbard, who continued not only with dianetics but with his new development, Scientology, virtually put psychiatrists out of private practice in this country. These days psychiatrists survive principally as employees of governments and hospitals.

Dianetics is a variant on the Freudian concept of early trauma being responsible for most of the problems of an adult. The difference is that, instead of dealing with the individual by free association, as Freud did, the most important traumatic experiences are located by several ingenious methods, and are dealt with until the trauma is erased. This approach made sense to me when I first read it. (My personal belief is that conformist Gardner would, in the 19th century, have regarded Freud's basic observations on trauma as unacceptable.)

*Point Two*: I deduce that Gardener, not having seen my name in the sf magazines, presumed that my career had been damaged by my other activities. Actually, I have about fifty books around; all but five of them are currently under contract. My reason for not offering my writings to sf magazines is that I believed that all these young writers needed the space I might have occupied. What prompted that was my recollection of what a struggle I had had in my early days. I needed every magazine sale I could get. And today that is still where new writers get their start. European and British sales of my books have been very considerable over the years.

*Point Three*: I cannot prove that my mind is still in good shape, but



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I believe it is. One proof is that I have been reading Martin Gardner's puzzles in Scientific American with enjoyment for what seems like decades. However, I sincerely hope for his sake that he has some other source of income—like maybe being a professor on a salary, doing his daily teaching thing for his students. If he hasn't, then he had better take a sharp look at conformism —maybe even make a study of what happens to conformists in our society: how high do they go? What kind of therapy should they have? (I don't think anyone has ever published a book on the subject.)

*Point Four*: The attack on General Semantics and Korzybski astonishes me. These days the principal supporters of General Semantics are professors and professional people in general. And, far from General Semantics having died out, two organizations have existed all these years. They are Korzybski's own Institute of General Semantics, Lakeville, Conn. (though Korzybski himself passed away in 1950) and International Society for General Semantics, Box 2469, San Francisco, Calif. 94126. The institute issues annual reports; the International Society has for over forty years published a quarterly journal, named ETC.

My two novels based on General Semantics—*The World of Null-A* and *The Players of Null-A* have been kept in print continuously for the past thirty years; and I have finally, after long urging by my French editor, completed a sequel titled *Null-A Three*. (He has already sent me a contract.)

*Point Five*: My use of the Bates system in *The Chronicler* was merely a device for getting my main character into an alternate world. There were a couple of good ideas in Bates method, but it did not achieve the results promised; and, as far as I can determine, it has disappeared from the universe.

The attack on Campbell is the saddest thing in Gardner's article. He was wrong a few times; but a heart condition has a tendency to addle the brain progressively—I've seen it often, though not always — but on the whole Campbell maintained his great editorial work to the end of his life. And *Analog* is on-going testimony to the fact that the editor of yesteryear was a great man.

I look forward to the next round of my ongoing dialogue with Martin Gardner . . . thirty years from now.

Sincerely,

A.E. Van-Vogt
Los Angeles, CA

*That Van Vogt still accepts the basic ideas of dianetics, and believes that this idiotic therapy has put psychiatrists in the United States "out of private practice," passeth all comprehension. Was there ever a cult more authoritarian than Scientology, or anyone more "conformist" than a Scientologist? I rest my case.*
*—Martin Gardner*

To the Editorial Staff:

I would like to thank you for your magazine. While there may be stories I don't enjoy as much as others, there has never been an issue that I haven't enjoyed over-all. When there is a story by an author whose writing I don't much like, I read it



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anyway in case this time they've written something I will like. In fact, I very sincerely doubt that you could do anything that would offend me so much that I would cancel my subscription.

So please continue with whatever changes you think are necessary. At least a few of your readers out here think change can be healthy, and as long as you continue to publish good fiction (be it science, fantasy, or whatever) we will enjoy the changes. After all, I rearrange the furniture in my apartment at least once a year; why shouldn't you rearrange your magazine? Keep up the good work!

Molly J. Herrington
Jensen Beach, FL

*I never have the impulse to change things around, which is why no one with any sense would leave me in direct charge of a magazine.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Friends,

I've been reading your magazine for several years now. I've come to regard all of you as friends. The first thing I read is the letters column. I want you to know that there are some of us out here that agree with Jerri Hobbs. I have always loved your magazine, and always will. I usually love everything about your magazine, but if there is something I don't especially care for, I feel that I have no right to complain. I'm sure that there is someone out there somewhere who likes it. After all we don't all have the same tastes, and magazines have to cater to everyone. I think that you do a very good job at that, besides we can all learn from new experiences. Aren't science fiction people supposed to have open minds?

I've wanted to say that every time I open up the letters column and read someone criticizing you for this or that, now I've gotten it off my chest. Thank you for listening.

I want you to know that I started reading your Viewpoint "An Immodest Proposal." I want you to know that I almost had a heart attack. I need a copy of your discussion of manuscript format and story needs. I have a story that I wrote three months ago that is very similar to that article. I've got to send it in before someone else does. And if you send me an impersonal rejection slip, I promise I won't mind if you have the Doctor sign it.

Sincerely yours,

Rnee' O'Bannon
5424 E 27th Terr.
Kansas City, MO 64128

*I honestly don't think my signature will make a rejection slip feel any better, if one comes. (Besides, I don't want to set a precedent.) But thank you for the flattering thought.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Shawna and *IAsfm* Staff,

When I first began my subscription to *IAsfm* it was on a whim. As I was growing up, reading science fiction was considered a rather strange pasttime for a girl. I persisted and increased my vocabulary, stimulated an interest in science and math and wrote short stories of my own. Then everyday life took over. I got married, served



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time in the military, had a daughter and started working in electronics. (Not necessarily in that order.) *IAsfm* has reawakened that curious little girl in me. I still work and I'm still a mother, but I now manage to find time to both read and write again. Please send me your guidelines on submissions. Maybe I'll find out if I'm as good as I always thought I could be. Thank you for your magazine.

K. E. Anderson
Fresno, CA

*Well, there you are. And when I tell people that the magazine is virtually a fountain of youth guaranteed to remove wrinkles and firm the flesh, they think I'm kidding.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Editor:

Why can't *IAsfm* publish sword-and-sorcery? I realize that S & S is not its primary publishing purpose, but one S & S story each month—as a regular feature, you understand—would add some variety to its fare.

Actually, I feel there should be a magazine completely devoted to S & S. I love SF, even "hard" SF, but I am not prejudiced toward S & S—I love it just as much, though I prefer, say Donaldson and Tolkien to Howard. I suppose I am hinting that you might branch off, with a sister magazine to *IAsfm*, devoted to heroic fantasy, but I really didn't intend to—it just slipped out.

At any rate, thanks for listening to my comments.

Michael Hardy
4295 Bonway Drive
Pensacola, FL 32504

*Like you, we are not prejudiced against sword and sorcery either. However, it is* not *science fiction, but a variety of fantasy, and while we do publish some fantasy it tends to be of the less easily classified variety. Thus I'm afraid S & S would have to be exceptionally good to pass over our threshold.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Editor:

Pamela Sargent's Viewpoint article was a joke. Right (albeit not a very funny one)? She couldn't possible be serious! I'm just trying to understand why you would print such drivel.

It is my firm conviction that you would have better served your readers by filling those pages with a good story. In that way you would also have been serving which ever unknown author you might have chosen to print.

As an aspiring writer myself, Sargent's article enraged and disgusted me. Those feelings have now been replaced by deep depression. Please, no more of this unnecessary and unrealistic negativeness.

Sincerely,

Martee Smith
Millbrae, CA

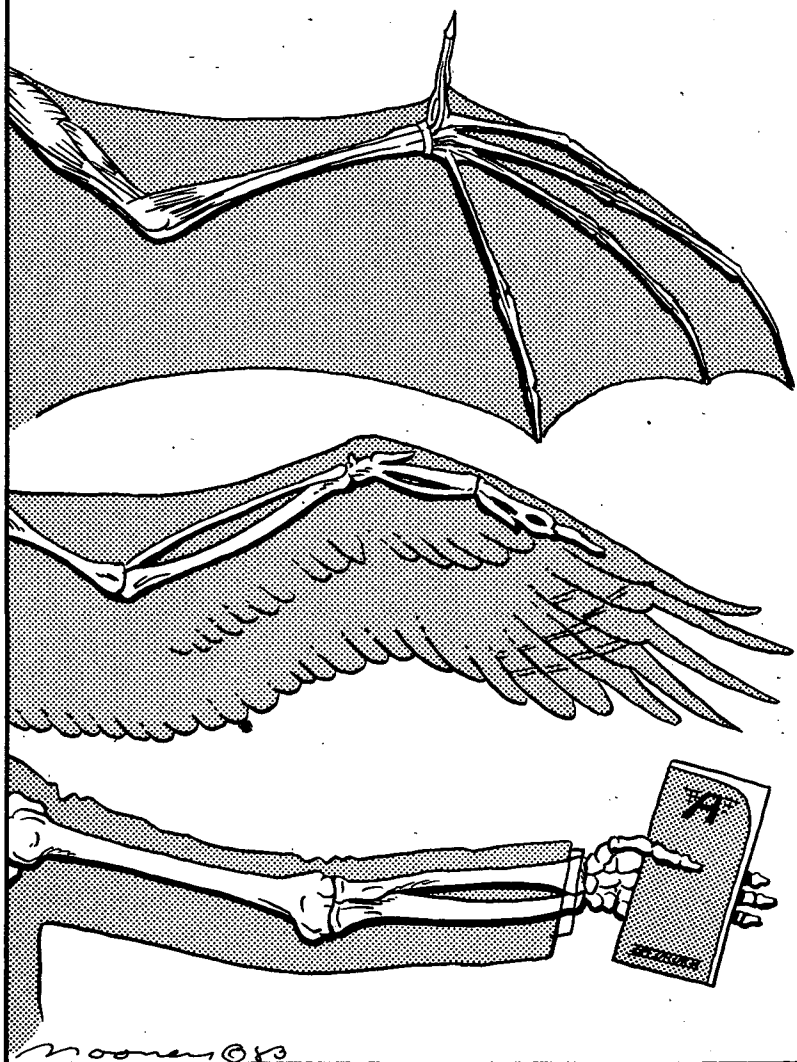
*The Sargent article* was *a legitimate Viewpoint. However, we never said Viewpoints had to be serious. This particular essay was drawn from a long-standing SF tradition—extrapolating current trends to their most outrageous conclusions.*

*—Isaac Asimov*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE MIRACLE OF FLIGHT




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dear Dr. Asimov,

I've kept and read every issue of your magazine from Vol. 1, No. 1 onward. (They're all in pristine condition, but I'm having difficulty in storing them. Any tips?) With the 6th Anniversary Issue I felt I'd better write.

First I'd like to say that your magazine has had many changes —and since one of the functions of SF is to accustom us to change it is a good thing it has—but one change I will never accept is the crossword. It just doesn't belong in your pages. *Please* get rid of it.

Second, the fiction in this issue was as good as ever. Jack McDevitt's "Cryptic" was excellent, as was the Brian Aldiss story. (I'm not sure why you published it in an SF magazine, but it *was* good. I suppose that is justification enough.) I enjoyed the cover story, the lighter stories, and just about everything else except Cherie Wilkerson's piece. Most stories of that type are boring; so was this. Minus that and the crossword and it would have been a great issue.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Webb
Bristol, England

*Personally, I prefer anacrostics to crossword puzzles, but will do crosswords in a pinch. Why don't you look at it as a device to test your SF knowledge?*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Editors:

In the May '83 issue, Pamela Sargent brings up some valid points about the quality of SF writing. Publishers seem to be looking for styles that are alike—styles that are alike those of best-selling SF authors.

To solve this problem, writers must be encouraged to be original, and to be true to themselves and writing as a craft. They must be told to break away from what is conventional and unimaginative, setting new precedents and standards. Only in this way, can we guarantee fresh and new writing styles.

However, a certain amount of responsibility falls on SF readers. We should not accept fiction that is "just like Heinlein" or that "sounds like Disch." Embrace the daring, the original, and shun books that are poor copies of those who ventured into that area of SF first.

Yours,

Matthew E. Tabery
Executive Editor,
The Minnesotan Science Fiction Reader
Golden Valley, MN

*In the long run, it is the original that pays off, and more copies don't endure. Which means a writer must be prepared to be patient. It seems a shame, but I don't know what can be done about it.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Dr. Asimov:

I have your January, 1983 editorial ("Women and Science Fiction") in front of me. I just searched through my disorganized stacks of *IAsfm* to find it. Why? You may well ask. Something you said in it has been irking me for these past five months.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, I know it was probably facetious, and was rather cute in its own way (as you are) but really—the reason women are entering science fiction in large numbers is SPOCK'S EARS? It's too gross a simplifaction to let pass (yeah, I know I've let it pass for five months—I'm slow on the uptake).

As a tried and true (if not born and bred) Trekk-*er*, I just have to clear this up. It is *not* his ears! You came closer with "unflappable," but that only touches the surface. I won't go into a treatise of my theories re: Spock and *Trek* except to explain some of the reasons he "fascinated" me (us? I'll assume there are others that feel this way). It was more than just his looks.

For starters, it was the first time I saw an alien on the tube that wasn't either a BEM or evil personified. Spock had that evil look (ears and eyes, ok) but wasn't. Maybe the physical appearance started us watching, but what kept us watching was the *relationships*. Between him and Kirk, McCoy. Between Spock and himself. Then we found out that he was *troubled*, just like the rest of us, and that sealed the link.

In the best of *Trek* those relationships were explored, layered on, allowed to grow; the worst need not be mentioned. But that one premise, that Human and Vulcan could grow a friendship, more, a brotherhood was the most powerful aspect of the entire *Trek* phenomenon. I'll take a leap in speculation and say that those (women *and* men) who slipped into science fiction (reading or writing) through *Trek* expanded trying to find more of this.

Thanks for the use of your soapbox.

Live long and prosper,

Donna Jadis
960 Moose Hill Road
Guilford, CT 06437

*You're undoubtedly right. I may have been influenced by attending all those Star Trek conventions a few years back at which everyone was wearing Vulcan ears.*

*—Isaac Asimov*

Dear Dr. Asimov,

Before I register a mild disagreement . . . I just spent a delightful afternoon with Lije Baley and R. Daneel Olivaw—*damn* but those books are just as good as I remembered them. I'm looking forward to the third. And *sigh* fourth, I hope.

On to the disagreement, such as it is.

I think you're right about how much a science consultation service for SF writers would be used, but not necessarily for the reason that I infer you to mean.

Speaking for myself, I can easily think of a score of subjects that I'd like to be more conversant in—beyond, say, the depth of your (very good, in my opinion) introductory books, but without necessarily putting in the effort to be able to follow, say, a *Scientific American*, in-depth piece. It's not *just* that I'm lazy; it seems to me that there's a shortage of intermediate science books and articles—on about the level of Jerry Pournelle's more equation-heavy *Galaxy* columns.

To take a specific example: it took me a devil of a long time fig-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uring out how to work the boron and fusion drive systems that I've been using in my Thousand Worlds series [one of which is in the current *IAsfm*]; I spent many, many hours, working through from $I_{sp}$ to mass ratios to what those mass ratios implied about the differences between the capabilities of the two different societies that have those different drives.

I could have used some help; a consultation service would have been most handy.

The only trouble is, *who would have been the consultant?*

Granted, you're not the only person who can clearly explain scientific matters to the layman, but that gift isn't common; anyone who could have broken down the $I_{sp}$/delta-v/mass ratio/$V_p$/etc. complex into easily digestible chunks would probably not work cheap. And with the demand for that sort of specific explanation being as low as it is, it would almost have to be a one-on-one service.

Which would mean a *large* hourly charge, probably much more than the typical writer who would use that service could pay. (The folks who wouldn't need it—you, Robert Heinlein, Jerry Pournelle, and similarly highly trained folks—a] could afford the charge, and b] wouldn't have to pay, even if you did need a bit of instruction on a fine point of science; there are people out there who would consider a phone call from me to be an impostion, while one from you would be a pleasure. I could—just barely conceivably—be wrong on that, but I'm not about to call up Stephen Hawking or Dan Alderson to find out.)

The only answer to the problem, it seems to me, is the usual one: the beginning SF writer has to work hard to master the tools of the trade, whether he or she is learning to make dialogue sound believable, or work out the lifetime of a Hawking black hole.

Nobody said this was going to be easy.

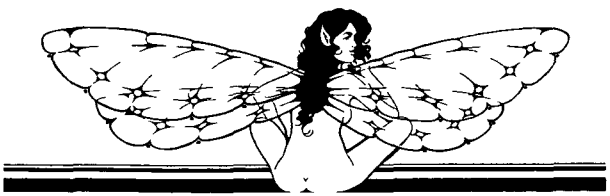
Let me end this letter on that note, where I strongly suspect we don't disagree at all.

Sincerely,

Joel Rosenberg
New Haven, CT

*Consultation services, if you are really competent, always command high prices. That's one reason I don't encourage people to consult me. I don't have the gall to charge what the service is worth. And I heartily agree with your answer to the problem.*

*—Isaac Asimov*





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# GAMING

by Dana Lombardy

Five games are on this year's awards ballot for "Best New Fantasy Game of 1982." These five top a list of almost twenty new fantasy board games that were introduced in 1982.

*Titan* by The Avalon Hill Game Co. (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214) is an impressive-looking board game in which each player is represented on the board by a leader counter or "Titan." The goal is to eliminate the other Titans while keeping yours alive. You do this through creating and maneuvering armies of monsters across an abstract master board which shows an ingenious matrix of triangles.

When opposing armies of monsters enter the same triangle, the counters are moved to a battleland—an area representing an enlargement of the specific triangle the armies are in. There the two armies fight, with the victor receiving "victory" points equal to the power-times-skill points of the enemy monsters he's killed. As your point-total increases, so does the power of your Titan.

*Titan* comes with a mounted game board, 12-page rules book, 621 die-cut counters representing titans, ogres, dragons, colossi, giants, etc., 6 battleland cards, and 4 dice. The game can be played by two to six players in a reasonable length of time.

*Sanctuary* by Mayfair Games Inc. (Box 5987, Chicago, IL 60680) was reviewed in the August issue of *IAsfm*. The game is for two to five players and takes place in the city of Sanctuary as it appears in Robert Asprin's various anthologies, such as *Thieves' World, Tales of the Vulgar Unicorn*, etc. The game board shows a three-dimensional, birds-eye view of the town, based on the maps from Asprin's books.

The object of the game is to be the first thief to accumulate 300 silver pieces after starting with 50. To do so, you draw an Event card, roll the dice, move your thief pawn, move a "Hell-Hound" pawn (governor's elite guard) to chase your opponents' pawns, and collect silver for a successful theft. The game is fast and fun, and captures a lot



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the "flavor" of Sanctuary's street encounters as described in Asprin's books.

*The Legend of Robin Hood*, also by The Avalon Hill Game Co., is a minigame recreating the adventures of fiction's most noble robber. One player assumes the role of Robin Hood, the other is the Sheriff of Nottingham. To win as the Sheriff, you must kill or capture Robin Hood, or prevent Robin from accomplishing his three goals.

Robin Hood's three goals, in addition to remaining free and alive, include: marrying Maid Marion; being with King Richard at the end of the game (who pardons Robin and returns his illegally annexed lands); and having at least twenty Marks in his treasury while reducing the Sheriff's to five or less.

The game includes a mounted board with a colorful map of Sherwood Forest and surrounding features, such as Nottingham castle; 81 die-cut counters representing Robin Hood, the Sheriff, Little John, Prince John, other characters, such as the Merry Men and Sheriff's men; Marks (money); and a short, 8-page rules folder.

In *Borderlands* by EON Products Inc. (RFD#2, Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005) you are the ruler of a barbaric land in a distant future, competing with neighboring nations that are struggling to grow and develop, while carefully balancing trade and warfare with the other players.

The object of the game is to be the first player whose tribe occupies three cities (and therefore be on the path to founding a civilization). Two to four players start with their tribes on an isolated continent.

You then begin by harvesting timber, raising horses, mining coal, iron, and gold. Initially you want to trade resources and develop boats, cities, and weapons. Alliances then help stop aggressive neighbors or help conquer more territory. The game's notes state that "Good will is usually helpful, but ultimately you will probably have to stab someone in the back."

*Borderlands* comes with a map of the isolated continent, 7-page rules folder, die, 16 resource location markers, 100 resource tokens, 80 player tokens, and 44 production tokens (cities, weapons, riverboats).

The fifth nominee is not strictly a "fantasy" subject. *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective* by Sleuth Publications Ltd. (2527 24th St., San Francisco, CA 94110) is a game that lets you match your detective skills with investigative fiction's most famous sleuth. The object is to solve any of the 10 cases provided in the game; then compare how you solved the case with Holmes's deductions of the crime.

The game can be played sol-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itaire, by two competing players, or as a group trying to solve the crimes. A binder has a "Clue Book" with all the clues for the ten different cases. Separate books that are stored in the binder include: Case Book with the ten cases and solutions at the end of the book; Quiz Book for comparing your solution to Holmes's; a small eight-page rules booklet; London Directory with locations of persons related to the cases; a reference map of Holmes' London of the late 1890s; and Newspaper Archive of various editions of *The Times*, with relevent information for the cases buried among the pages of news.

While not technically a "fantasy" game, it was thought so highly of as to be voted onto the final awards ballot in the category because it features a fictional character. Like the other games reviewed here, it's highly recommended as one of the best games introduced in 1982. ●

## MARIE CURIE CONTEMPLATING THE ROLE OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS IN THE GLOW OF A BEAKER

Self-luminous as her radium granules
Marie's thoughts
Took on new weight and number
That cast light impressions of possibility
Across the night-black templates
Of an open praire

—Robert Frazier



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# MARTIN GARDNER

# THE CASTRATI OF WOMENSA

Travel around the galaxy, by way of shortcuts through Wheeler wormholes, became commonplace in the twenty-third century. As a result, thousands of small planets, with earthlike atmospheres, became colonized by adventurous earthlings, and over the centuries each planet developed its own unique culture.

Womensa was such a planet. Its original settlers were German women of extremely high intelligence who belonged to an organization for which their planet was named. For breeding purposes they took with them a supply of males who had been genetically engineered to combine handsome faces with muscular bodies and low-grade intelligence. Low, that is, by Womensa standards. By twentieth-century standards they had the IQs of an Asimov.

The colony was a monogamous and matriarchal dictatorship ruled by a supreme dictator named Fidelia. No rules governed the love lives of unmarried men or of women, married or single, but all husbands were expected to remain permanently faithful. If it could be proved that a man committed an infidelity, the punishment was swift and severe. He was castrated and placed in the Fidelia Castrato Choir, a group of male sopranos and altos



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

that sang on festive occasions and at official state functions.

One day Fidelia was approached by her Minister of Morals who, like Fidelia, had no husband. "Oh Great One," said the minister, "it has come to my attention that there has been an alarming rash of infidelities in our capital city. Ten husbands are suspected of having been unfaithful."

Fidelia was shocked. "Issue a decree at once," she said, between angry chomps on her cigar, "stating that the government is aware of at least one infidelity, perhaps more, among the husbands of our city. Announce also that when a wife is certain her husband has been unfaithful, she must report it to your office at once. The cad will castrated later that day and sent to the choir. His wife will be free to remarry."

"It will create a furor, mein führerin," said the minister, bowing low and giving the Womensa salute with her middle finger, "but it shall be done."

To understand the bizarre consequences of this decree, you must accept the following posits about Womensa folkways:

1. As soon as a husband is unfaithful, gossip spreads so rapidly that within an hour every married woman in the city hears of it except the wronged wife.
2. Knowledge of an emasculation spreads with the same speed.
3. Any statement made by *die führerin* is accepted as true.
4. All females of Womensa are perfect logicians. They immediately grasp the implications of any argument, and can reason with unerring accuracy.

After the decree was issued, nine days went by with no reports of infidelities. Then on the tenth day, ten wives reported the names of their guilty husbands.

Can you explain the ten-day delay? If not, you'll find the curious logic behind it made clear on page 40.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# IAsfm Puzzle #17 by Merl H. Reagle

# MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

## ACROSS

1 Luke Skywalker's aunt
5 Cover up, as a falcon's eyes
9 Mystery message
13 Words with get or pour
14 Counting-out word
15 "Colossus" author D.F. ——
16 ?
19 Cuckoobird
20 Look on lovingly
21 ?
25 Hot-coffee sampling
28 2.2046 lbs.
29 Pine named for a Syrian city
31 Used to be
32 Actress Verdugo
35 Piers Anthony's "—— Against Time"
36 ?
40 SF movie luminary, perhaps
42 Teasdale and others
43 Here, in Tours
46 "The Moon is —— Mistress"
49 Distilled form
51 Navel decoration
52 ?
55 Hair-raising
56 Sam —— (Dr. Seuss character)
57 ?
64 Person without the Force, perhaps
65 Put up
66 Arab bigwig
67 It comes after chow
68 —— chic
69 Sufficiently

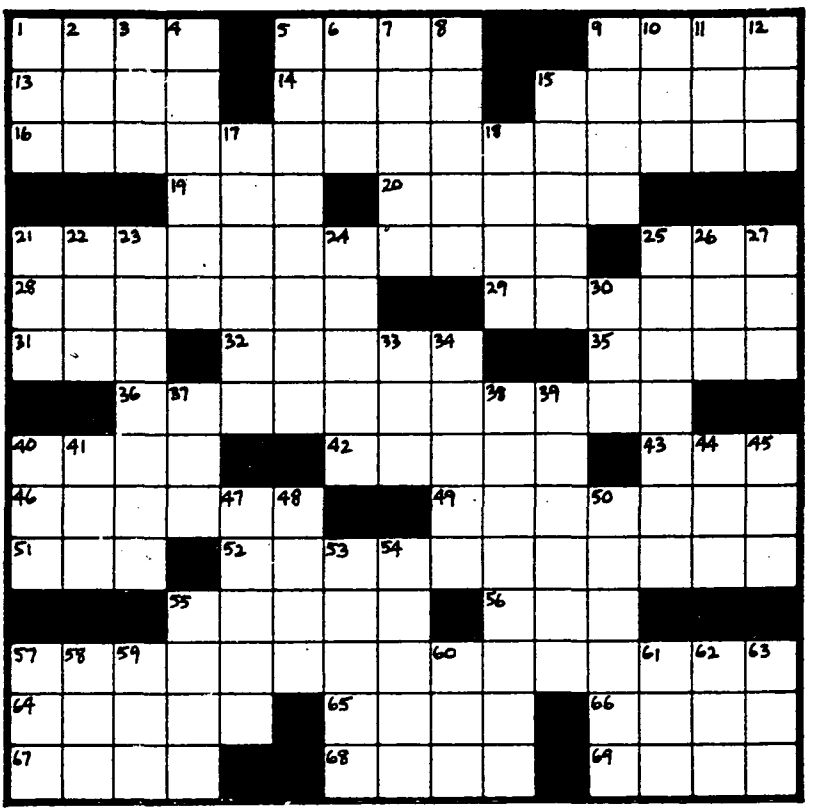
## DOWN

1 What you might see if you looked a gift horse in the mouth
2 Ending in The Good Book
3 Sturgeon output
4 Expose Darth Vader
5 How Flash Gordon appeared
6 Wiggler in "The Wrath of Khan"
7 Early computer
8 She's Wonder Woman
9 Spot for skiing
10 "The —— Tree"
11 Lester —— Rey
12 Feminine suffix
15 Superman's real dad
17 Total, in Le Havre
18 Samuel Delany book
21 "The Dun —— "
22 Genetic ingredients
23 Diplomatic agreement, in a way
24 Type of soil
25 Kind of relationship lovers have in SF
26 "Doc" Smith's "Spacehounds of —— "
27 M. Valdemar's chronicler
30 Hit the wrong button
33 TV syndication org.
34 —— correo (air mail): Sp.
37 Part of ETA; abbr.
38 Fruit-eating birds of North America
39 "It can't be as bad ——!"
40 Problem with old beds
41 Word introducing 21, 52 and 57 Across
44 One-fourth of M
45 "—— Alive!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Solution on page 66

**47** "The —— Look Up"
**48** Creature feature
**50** Traced the perimeter
**53** Shining, in Stuttgart
**54** "Merry Widow" composer
**55** Rival of Harrow
**57** Author of "The Futurological Congress"
**58** Robert Adams's "Bili the ——"
**59** ——-fi
**60** Ending for eth or meth
**61** Australian avifauna
**62** Big goose egg
**63** "Keep going!"



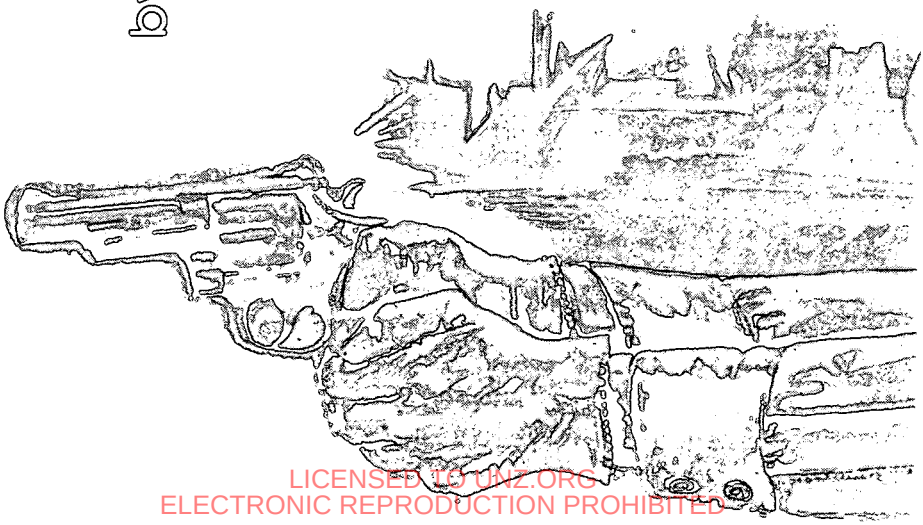
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# SPEECH SOUNDS

art: Val Lindahn

by Octavia E. Butler

Octavia E. Butler is the author of *Mind of My Mind*, *Patternmaster*, *Kindred*, and *Wild Seed*, and on the basis of these books, she's developed a well-deserved following. Her new novel, *Clay's Ark*, due out in January of 1984, from St. Martin's Press can only cause her circle of admirers to grow. We're delighted, therefore, to be able to publish one of her rare short stories, and are determined to see more from her.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was trouble aboard the Washington Boulevard bus. Rye had expected trouble sooner or later in her journey. She had put off going until loneliness and hopelessness drove her out. She believed she might have one group of relatives left alive—a brother and his two children twenty miles away in Pasadena. That was a day's journey one-way, if she were lucky. The unexpected arrival of the bus as she left her Virginia Road home had seemed to be a piece of luck—until the trouble began.

Two young men were involved in a disagreement of some kind, or, more likely, a misunderstanding. They stood in the aisle, grunting and gesturing at each other, each in his own uncertain "T" stance as the bus lurched over the potholes. The driver seemed to be putting some effort into keeping them off balance. Still, their gestures stopped just short of contact—mock punches, hand-games of intimidation to replace lost curses.

People watched the pair, then looked at each other and made small anxious sounds. Two children whimpered.

Rye sat a few feet behind the disputants and across from the back door. She watched the two carefully, knowing the fight would begin when someone's nerve broke or someone's hand slipped or someone came to the end of his limited ability to communicate. These things could happen any time.

One of them happened as the bus hit an especially large pothole and one man, tall, thin, and sneering, was thrown into his shorter opponent.

Instantly, the shorter man drove his left fist into the disintegrating sneer. He hammered his larger opponent as though he neither had nor needed any weapon other than his left fist. He hit quickly enough, hard enough to batter his opponent down before the taller man could regain his balance or hit back even once.

People screamed or squawked in fear. Those nearby scrambled to get out of the way. Three more young men roared in excitement and gestured wildly. Then, somehow, a second dispute broke out between two of these three—probably because one inadvertently touched or hit the other.

As the second fight scattered frightened passengers, a woman shook the driver's shoulder and grunted as she gestured toward the fighting.

The driver grunted back through bared teeth. Frightened, the woman drew away.

Rye, knowing the methods of bus drivers, braced herself and held on to the crossbar of the seat in front of her. When the driver


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hit the brakes, she was ready and the combatants were not. They fell over seats and onto screaming passengers, creating even more confusion. At least one more fight started.

The instant the bus came to a full stop, Rye was on her feet, pushing the back door. At the second push, it opened and she jumped out, holding her pack in one arm. Several other passengers followed, but some stayed on the bus. Buses were so rare and irregular now, people rode when they could, no matter what. There might not be another bus today—or tomorrow. People started walking, and if they saw a bus they flagged it down. People making intercity trips like Rye's from Los Angeles to Pasadena made plans to camp out, or risked seeking shelter with locals who might rob or murder them.

The bus did not move, but Rye moved away from it. She intended to wait until the trouble was over and get on again, but if there was shooting, she wanted the protection of a tree. Thus, she was near the curb when a battered, blue Ford on the other side of the street made a U-turn and pulled up in front of the bus. Cars were rare these days—as rare as a severe shortage of fuel and of relatively unimpaired mechanics could make them. Cars that still ran were as likely to be used as weapons as they were to serve as transportation. Thus, when the driver of the Ford beckoned to Rye, she moved away warily. The driver got out—a big man, young, neatly bearded with dark, thick hair. He wore a long overcoat and a look of wariness that matched Rye's. She stood several feet from him, waiting to see what he would do. He looked at the bus, now rocking with the combat inside, then at the small cluster of passengers who had gotten off. Finally he looked at Rye again.

She returned his gaze, very much aware of the old forty-five automatic her jacket concealed. She watched his hands.

He pointed with his left hand toward the bus. The dark-tinted windows prevented him from seeing what was happening inside.

His use of the left hand interested Rye more than his obvious question. Left-handed people tended to be less impaired, more reasonable and comprehending, less driven by frustration, confusion, and anger.

She imitated his gesture, pointing toward the bus with her own left hand, then punching the air with both fists.

The man took off his coat revealing a Los Angeles Police Department uniform complete with baton and service revolver.

Rye took another step back from him. There was no more LAPD,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no more *any* large organization, governmental or private. There were neighborhood patrols and armed individuals. That was all.

The man took something from his coat pocket, then threw the coat into the car. Then he gestured Rye back, back toward the rear of the bus. He had something made of plastic in his hand. Rye did not understand what he wanted until he went to the rear door of the bus and beckoned her to stand there. She obeyed mainly out of curiosity. Cop or not, maybe he could do something to stop the stupid fighting.

He walked around the front of the bus, to the street side where the driver's window was open. There, she thought she saw him throw something into the bus. She was still trying to peer through the tinted glass when people began stumbling out the rear door, choking and weeping. Gas.

Rye caught an old woman who would have fallen, lifted two little children down when they were in danger of being knocked down and trampled. She could see the bearded man helping people at the front door. She caught a thin old man shoved out by one of the combatants. Staggered by the old man's weight, she was barely able to get out of the way as the last of the young men pushed his way out. This one, bleeding from nose and mouth, stumbled into another and they grappled blindly, still sobbing from the gas.

The bearded man helped the bus driver out through the front door, though the driver did not seem to appreciate his help. For a moment, Rye thought there would be another fight. The bearded man stepped back and watched the driver gesture threateningly, watched him shout in wordless anger.

The bearded man stood still, made no sound, refused to respond to clearly obscene gestures. The least impaired people tended to do this—stand back unless they were physically threatened and let those with less control scream and jump around. It was as though they felt it beneath them to be as touchy as the less comprehending. This was an attitude of superiority and that was the way people like the bus driver preceived it. Such "superiority" was frequently punished by beatings, even by death. Rye had had close calls of her own. As a result, she never went unarmed. And in this world where the only likely common language was body language, being armed was often enough. She had rarely had to draw her gun or even display it.

The bearded man's revolver was on constant display. Apparently that was enough for the bus driver. The driver spat in disgust, glared at the bearded man for a moment longer, then


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strode back to his gas-filled bus. He stared at it for a moment, clearly wanting to get in, but the gas was still too strong. Of the windows, only his tiny driver's window actually opened. The front door was open, but the rear door would not stay open unless someone held it. Of course, the air conditioning had failed long ago. The bus would take some time to clear. It was the driver's property, his livelihood. He had pasted old magazine pictures of items he would accept as fare on its sides. Then he would use what he collected to feed his family or to trade. If his bus did not run, he did not eat. On the other hand, if the inside of his bus were torn apart by senseless fighting, he would not eat very well either. He was apparently unable to preceive this. All he could see was that it would be some time before he could use his bus again. He shook his fist at the bearded man and shouted. There seemed to be words in his shout, but Rye could not understand them. She did not know whether this was his fault or hers. She had heard so little coherent human speech for the past three years, she was no longer certain how well she recognized it, no longer certain of the degree of her own impairment.

The bearded man sighed. He glanced toward his car, then beckoned to Rye. He was ready to leave, but he wanted something from her first. No. No, he wanted her to leave with him. Risk getting into his car when, in spite of his uniform, law and order were nothing—not even words any longer.

She shook her head in a universally understood negative, but the man continued to beckon.

She waved him away. He was doing what the less-impaired rarely did—drawing potentially negative attention to another of his kind. People from the bus had begun to look at her.

One of the men who had been fighting tapped another on the arm, then pointed from the bearded man to Rye, and finally held up the first two fingers of his right hand as though giving two-thirds of a Boy Scout salute. The gesture was very quick, its meaning obvious even at a distance. She had been grouped with the bearded man. Now what?

The man who had made the gesture started toward her.

She had no idea what she intended, but she stood her ground. The man was half-a-foot taller than she was and perhaps ten years younger. She did not imagine she could outrun him. Nor did she expect anyone to help her if she needed help. The people around her were all strangers.

She gestured once—a clear indication to the man to stop. She did not intend to repeat the gesture. Fortunately, the man obeyed.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He gestured obscenely and several other men laughed. Loss of verbal language had spawned a whole new set of obscene gestures. The man, with stark simplicity, had accused her of sex with the bearded man and had suggested she accommodate the other men present—beginning with him.

Rye watched him wearily. People might very well stand by and watch if he tried to rape her. They would also stand and watch her shoot him. Would he push things that far?

He did not. After a series of obscene gestures that brought him no closer to her, he turned contemptuously and walked away.

And the bearded man still waited. He had removed his service revolver, holster and all. He beckoned again, both hands empty. No doubt his gun was in the car and within easy reach, but his taking it off impressed her. Maybe he was all right. Maybe he was just alone. She had been alone herself for three years. The illness had stripped her, killing her children one by one, killing her husband, her sister, her parents. . . .

The illness, if it was an illness, had cut even the living off from one another. As it swept over the country, people hardly had time to lay blame on the Soviets (though they were falling silent along with the rest of the world), on a new virus, a new pollutant, radiation, divine retribution. . . . The illness was stroke-swift in the way it cut people down and strokelike in some of its effects. But it was highly specific. Language was always lost or severely impaired. It was never regained. Often there was also paralysis, intellectual impairment, death.

Rye walked toward the bearded man, ignoring the whistling and applauding of two of the young men and their thumbs-up signs to the bearded man. If he had smiled at them or acknowledged them in any way, she would almost certainly have changed her mind. If she had let herself think of the possible deadly consequences of getting into a stranger's car, she would have changed her mind. Instead, she thought of the man who lived across the street from her. He rarely washed since his bout with the illness. And he had gotten into the habit of urinating wherever he happened to be. He had two women already—one tending each of his large gardens. They put up with him in exchange for his protection. He had made it clear that he wanted Rye to become his third woman.

She got into the car and the bearded man shut the door. She watched as he walked around to the driver's door—watched for his sake because his gun was on the seat beside her. And the bus driver and a pair of young men had come a few steps closer. They



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did nothing, though, until the bearded man was in the car. Then one of them threw a rock. Others followed his example, and as the car drove away, several rocks bounced off it harmlessly.

When the bus was some distance behind them, Rye wiped sweat from her forehead and longed to relax. The bus would have taken her more than halfway to Pasadena. She would have had only ten miles to walk. She wondered how far she would have to walk now—and wondered if walking a long distance would be her only problem.

At Figuroa and Washington where the bus normally made a left turn, the bearded man stopped, looked at her, and indicated that she should choose a direction. When she directed him left and he actually turned left, she began to relax. If he was willing to go where she directed, perhaps he was safe.

As they passed blocks of burned, abandoned buildings, empty lots, and wrecked or stripped cars, he slipped a gold chain over his head and handed it to her. The pendant attatched to it was a smooth, glassy, black rock. Obsidian. His name might be Rock or Peter or Black, but she decided to think of him as Obsidian. Even her sometimes useless memory would retain a name like Obsidian.

She handed him her own name symbol—a pin in the shape of a large golden stalk of wheat. She had bought it long before the illness and the silence began. Now she wore it, thinking it was as close as she was likely to come to Rye. People like Obsidian who had not known her before probably thought of her as Wheat. Not that it mattered. She would never hear her name spoken again.

Obsidian handed her pin back to her. He caught her hand as she reached for it and rubbed his thumb over her calluses.

He stopped at First Street and asked which way again. Then, after turning right as she had indicated, he parked near the Music Center. There, he took a folded paper from the dashboard and unfolded it. Rye recognized it as a street map, though the writing on it meant nothing to her. He flattened the map, took her hand again, and put her index finger on one spot. He touched her, touched himself, pointed toward the floor. In effect, "We are here." She knew he wanted to know where she was going. She wanted to tell him, but she shook her head sadly. She had lost reading and writing. That was her most serious impairment and her most painful. She had taught history at UCLA. She had done freelance writing. Now she could not even read her own manuscripts. She had a house full of books that she could neither read nor bring



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herself to use as fuel. And she had a memory that would not bring back to her much of what she had read before.

She stared at the map, trying to calculate. She had been born in Pasadena, had lived for fifteen years in Los Angeles. Now she was near L.A. Civic Center. She knew the relative positions of the two cities, knew streets, directions, even knew to stay away from freeways which might be blocked by wrecked cars and destroyed overpasses. She ought to know how to point out Pasadena even though she could not recognize the word.

Hesitantly, she placed her hand over a pale orange patch in the upper right corner of the map. That should be right. Pasadena.

Obsidian lifted her hand and looked under it, then folded the map and put it back on the dashboard. He could read, she realized belatedly. He could probably write, too. Abruptly, she hated him—deep, bitter hatred. What did literacy mean to him—a grown man who played cops and robbers? But he was literate and she was not. She never would be. She felt sick to her stomach with hatred, frustration, and jealousy. And only a few inches from her hand was a loaded gun.

She held herself still, staring at him, almost seeing his blood. But her rage crested and ebbed and she did nothing.

Obsidian reached for her hand with hesitant familiarity. She looked at him. Her face had already revealed too much. No person still living in what was left of human society could fail to recognize that expression, that jealousy.

She closed her eyes wearily, drew a deep breath. She had experienced longing for the past, hatred of the present, growing hopelessness, purposelessness, but she had never experienced such a powerful urge to kill another person. She had left her home, finally, because she had come near to killing herself. She had found no reason to stay alive. Perhaps that was why she had gotten into Obsidian's car. She had never before done such a thing.

He touched her mouth and made chatter motions with thumb and fingers. Could she speak?

She nodded and watched his milder envy come and go. Now both had admitted what it was not safe to admit, and there had been no violence. He tapped his mouth and forehead and shook his head. He did not speak or comprehend spoken language. The illness had played with them, taking away, she suspected, what each valued most.

She plucked at his sleeve, wondering why he had decided on his own to keep the LAPD alive with what he had left. He was sane enough otherwise. Why wasn't he at home raising corn,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rabbits, and children? But she did not know how to ask. Then he put his hand on her thigh and she had another question to deal with.

She shook her head. Disease, pregnancy, helpless, solitary agony . . . no.

He massaged her thigh gently and smiled in obvious disbelief.

No one had touched her for three years. She had not wanted anyone to touch her. What kind of world was this to chance bringing a child into even if the father were willing to stay and help raise it? It was too bad, though. Obsidian could not know how attractive he was to her—young, probably younger than she was, clean, asking for what he wanted rather than demanding it. But none of that mattered. What were a few moments of pleasure measured against a lifetime of consequences?

He pulled her closer to him and for a moment she let herself enjoy the closeness. He smelled good—male and good. She pulled away reluctantly.

He sighed, reached toward the glove compartment. She stiffened, not knowing what to expect, but all he took out was a small box. The writing on it meant nothing to her. She did not understand until he broke the seal, opened the box, and took out a condom. He looked at her and she first looked away in surprise. Then she giggled. She could not remember when she had last giggled.

He grinned, gestured toward the back seat, and she laughed aloud. Even in her teens, she had disliked back seats of cars. But she looked around at the empty streets and ruined buildings, then she got out and into the back seat. He let her put the condom on him, then seemed surprised at her eagerness.

Sometime later, they sat together, covered by his coat, unwilling to become clothed near-strangers again just yet. He made rock-the-baby gestures and looked questioningly at her.

She swallowed, shook her head. She did not know how to tell him her children were dead.

He took her hand and drew a cross in it with his index finger, then made his baby-rocking gesture again.

She nodded, held up three fingers, then turned away, trying to shut out a sudden flood of memories. She had told herself that the children growing up now were to be pitied. They would run through the downtown canyons with no real memory of what the buildings had been or even how they had come to be. Today's children gathered books as well as wood to be burned as fuel. They ran through the streets chasing each other and hooting like



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chimpanzees. They had no future. They were now all they would ever be.

He put his hand on her shoulder and she turned suddenly, fumbling for his small box, then urging him to make love to her again. He could give her forgetfulness and pleasure. Until now, nothing had been able to do that. Until now, every day had brought her closer to the time when she would do what she had left home to avoid doing: putting her gun in her mouth and pulling the trigger.

She asked Obsidian if he would come home with her, stay with her.

He looked surprised and pleased once he understood. But he did not answer at once. Finally he shook his head as she had feared he might. He was probably having too much fun playing cops and robbers and picking up women.

She dressed in silent disappointment, unable to feel any anger toward him. Perhaps he already had a wife and a home. That was likely. The illness had been harder on men than on women—had killed more men, had left male survivors more severely impaired. Men like Obsidian were rare. Women either settled for less or stayed alone. If they found an Obsidian, they did what they could to keep him. Rye suspected he had someone younger, prettier keeping him.

He touched her while she was strapping her gun on and asked with a complicated series of gestures whether it was loaded.

She nodded grimly.

He patted her arm.

She asked once more if he would come home with her, this time using a different series of gestures. He had seemed hesitant. Perhaps he could be courted.

He got out and into the front seat without responding.

She took her place in front again, watching him. Now he plucked at his uniform and looked at her. She thought she was being asked something, but did not know what it was.

He took off his badge, tapped it with one finger, then tapped his chest. Of course.

She took the badge from his hand and pinned her wheat stalk to it. If playing cops and robbers was his only insanity, let him play. She would take him, uniform and all. It occurred to her that she might eventually lose him to someone he would meet as he had met her. But she would have him for a while.

He took the street map down again, tapped it, pointed vaguely northeast toward Pasadena, then looked at her.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She shrugged, tapped his shoulder then her own, and held up her index and second fingers tight together, just to be sure.

He grasped the two fingers and nodded. He was with her.

She took the map from him and threw it onto the dashboard. She pointed back southwest—back toward home. Now she did not have to go to Pasadena. Now she could go on having a brother there and two nephews—three right-handed males. Now she did not have to find out for certain whether she was as alone as she feared. Now she was not alone.

Obsidian took Hill Street south, then Washington west, and she leaned back, wondering what it would be like to have someone again. With what she had scavenged, what she had preserved, and what she grew, there was easily enough food for him. There was certainly room enough in a four-bedroom house. He could move his possessions in. Best of all, the animal across the street would pull back and possibly not force her to kill him.

Obsidian had drawn her closer to him and she had put her head on his shoulder when suddenly he braked hard, almost throwing her off the seat. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw that someone had run across the street in front of the car. One car on the street and someone had to run in front of it.

Straightening up, Rye saw that the runner was a woman, fleeing from an old frame house to a boarded-up storefront. She ran silently, but the man who followed her a moment later shouted what sounded like garbled words as he ran. He had something in his hand. Not a gun. A knife, perhaps.

The woman tried a door, found it locked, looked around desperately, finally snatched up a fragment of glass broken from the storefront window. With this she turned to face her pursuer. Rye thought she would be more likely to cut her own hand than to hurt anyone else with the glass.

Obsidian jumped from the car, shouting. It was the first time Rye had heard his voice—deep and hoarse from disuse. He made the same sound over and over the way some speechless people did, "Da, da, da!"

Rye got out of the car as Obsidian ran toward the couple. He had drawn his gun. Fearful, she drew her own and released the safety. She looked around to see who else might be attracted to the scene. She saw the man glance at Obsidian, then suddenly lunge at the woman. The woman jabbed his face with her glass, but he caught her arm and managed to stab her twice before Obsidian shot him.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The man doubled, then toppled, clutching his abdomen. Obsidian shouted, then gestured Rye over to help the woman.

Rye moved to the woman's side, remembering that she had little more than bandages and antiseptic in her pack. But the woman was beyond help. She had been stabbed with a long, slender, boning knife.

She touched Obsidian to let him know the woman was dead. He had bent to check the wounded man who lay still and also seemed dead. But as Obsidian looked around to see what Rye wanted, the man opened his eyes. Face contorted, he seized Obsidian's just-holstered revolver and fired. The bullet caught Obsidian in the temple and he collapsed.

It happened just that simply, just that fast. An instant later, Rye shot the wounded man as he was turning the gun on her.

And Rye was alone—with three corpses.

She knelt beside Obsidian, dry-eyed, frowning, trying to understand why everything had suddenly changed. Obsidian was gone. He had died and left her—like everyone else.

Two very small children came out of the house from which the man and woman had run—a boy and girl perhaps three years old. Holding hands, they crossed the street toward Rye. They stared at her, then edged past her and went to the dead woman. The girl shook the woman's arm as though trying to wake her.

This was too much. Rye got up, feeling sick to her stomach with grief and anger. If the children began to cry, she thought she would vomit.

They were on their own, those two kids. They were old enough to scavenge. She did not need any more grief. She did not need a stranger's children who would grow up to be hairless chimps.

She went back to the car. She could drive home, at least. She remembered how to drive.

The thought that Obsidian should be buried occurred to her before she reached the car, and she did vomit.

She had found and lost the man so quickly. It was as though she had been snatched from comfort and security and given a sudden, inexplicable beating. Her head would not clear. She could not think.

Somehow, she made herself go back to him, look at him. She found herself on her knees beside him with no memory of having knelt. She stroked his face, his beard. One of the children made a noise and she looked at them, at the woman who was probably their mother. The children looked back at her, obviously frightened. Perhaps it was their fear that reached her finally.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She had been about to drive away and leave them. She had almost done it, almost left two toddlers to die. Surely there had been enough dying. She would have to take the children home with her. She would not be able to live with any other decision. She looked around for a place to bury three bodies. Or two. She wondered if the murderer were the children's father. Before the silence, the police had always said some of the most dangerous calls they went out on were domestic disturbance calls. Obsidian should have known that—not that the knowledge would have kept him in the car. It would not have held her back either. She could not have watched the woman murdered and done nothing.

She dragged Obsidian toward the car. She had nothing to dig with here, and no one to guard for her while she dug. Better to take the bodies with her and bury them next to her husband and her children. Obsidian would come home with her after all.

When she had gotten him onto the floor in the back, she returned for the woman. The little girl, thin, dirty, solemn, stood up and unknowingly gave Rye a gift. As Rye began to drag the woman by her arms, the little girl screamed, "No!"

Rye dropped the woman and stared at the girl.

"No!" the girl repeated. She came to stand beside the woman. "Go away!" she told Rye.

"Don't talk," the little boy said to her. There was no blurring or confusing of sounds. Both children had spoken and Rye had understood. The boy looked at the dead murderer and moved farther from him. He took the girl's hand. "Be quiet," he whispered.

Fluent speech! Had the woman died because she could talk and had taught her children to talk? Had she been killed by a husband's festering anger or by a stranger's jealous rage? And the children . . . they must have been born after the silence. Had the disease run its course, then? Or were these children simply immune? Certainly they had had time to fall sick and silent. Rye's mind leaped ahead. What if children of three or fewer years were safe and able to learn language? What if all they needed were teachers? Teachers and protectors.

Rye glanced at the dead murderer. To her shame, she thought she could understand some of the passions that must have driven him, whoever he was. Anger, frustration, hopelessness, insane jealousy . . . how many more of him were there—people willing to destroy what they could not have?

Obsidian had been the protector, had chosen that role for who knew what reason. Perhaps putting on an obsolete uniform and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patrolling the empty streets had been what he did instead of putting a gun into his mouth. And now that there was something worth protecting, he was gone.

She had been a teacher. A good one. She had been a protector, too, though only of herself. She had kept herself alive when she had no reason to live. If the illness let these children alone, she could keep them alive.

Somehow she lifted the dead woman into her arms and placed her on the back seat of the car. The children began to cry, but she knelt on the broken pavement and whispered to them, fearful of frightening them with the harshness of her long unused voice.

"It's all right," she told them. "You're going with us, too. Come on." She lifted them both, one in each arm. They were so light. Had they been getting enough to eat?

The boy covered her mouth with his hand, but she moved her face away. "It's all right for me to talk," she told him. "As long as no one's around, it's all right." She put the boy down on the front seat of the car and he moved over without being told to, to make room for the girl. When they were both in the car Rye leaned against the window, looking at them, seeing that they were less afraid now, that they watched her with at least as much curiosity as fear.

"I'm Valerie Rye," she said, savoring the words. "It's all right for you to talk to me." ●

MARTIN GARDNER (From page 23)

## SOLUTION TO THE CASTRATI OF WOMENSA

To comprehend how the wives reasoned, let us first suppose there had been just one unfaithful husband. By the first posit, every wife in the city would know of the infidelity except the wronged wife. Knowing that no other husband was unfaithful, and believing the decree, the wronged wife would know that her own husband must be the guilty one and would at once report him.

Now consider what would happen had there been just two guilty husbands. Call their wives *A* and *B*. *A* would know that *B*'s husband had been unfaithful. If he were the only guilty husband, *A* would expect *B* (by the reasoning above) to know at once that her husband was guilty. Therefore, she would report him on the first



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

day. However, when the first day went by without an emasculation, *A* would realize there had to be *two* unfaithful husbands. Because *A* knew of only one (*B*'s husband), *A* would reason that the second guilty man had to be her own spouse. Therefore, she would report him on the second day. Naturally, wife *B* would reason exactly the same way. She, too, would report her husband on the second day.

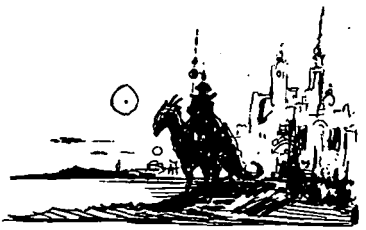
Consider the case of three unfaithful husbands. Each of their wives, knowing of two infidelities, would expect (by the above reasoning) two emasculations on the second day. When the second day passed with no such operations, each of the three wives would know there was a third guilty man, namely their own husband. Hence three reports would be made on the third day. And if there were four guilty men, each of their wives would reduce the situation to the previous case of three and not report their husbands until the fourth day.

Mathematicians call this type of sequential reasoning "mathematical induction." Clearly it extends to *n* cases of infidelities. On the *n*th day after the decree, *n* emasculations would take place.

After the ten punishments had been carried out, the husbands of Womensa maintained strict control over their passions for several months. This gave them time to think carefully about the logic involved in the way their wives had reasoned. One day it occurred to them that there was a simple way to escape the consequences of such a decree.

Details of their plan spread quickly among them. Infidelities began to occur again, and Fidelia was forced to issue a second decree exactly like the former one. This time, however, nothing happened. Months and even years went by, but no infidelities were reported. Indeed, the plan was so successful that it soon became apparent that the decree was totally useless in uncovering the identities of unfaithful husbands.

What was the clever plan? The astonishing answer is on page 67.





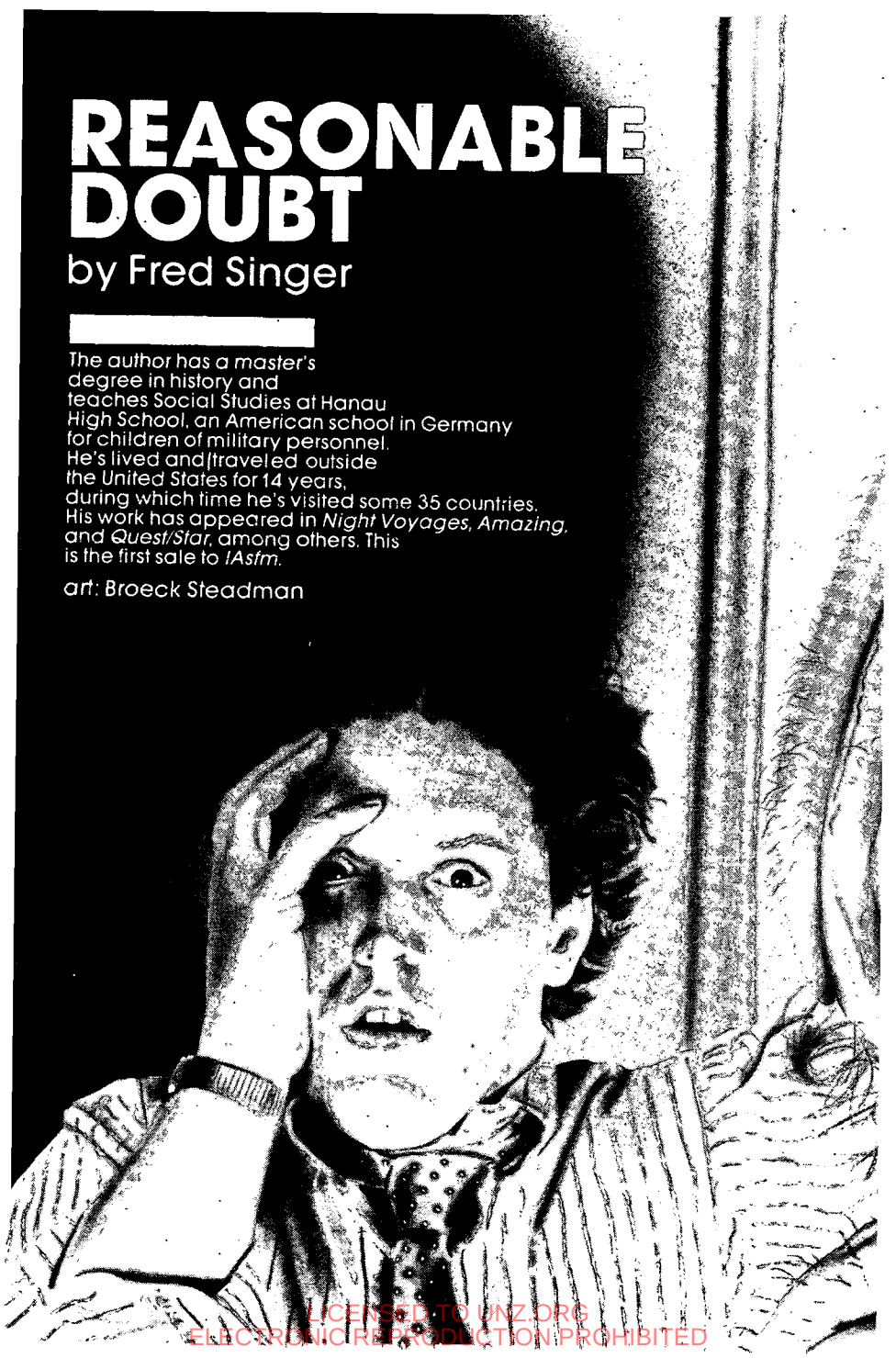
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# REASONABLE DOUBT

by Fred Singer

*The author has a master's degree in history and teaches Social Studies at Hanau High School, an American school in Germany for children of military personnel. He's lived and traveled outside the United States for 14 years, during which time he's visited some 35 countries. His work has appeared in Night Voyages, Amazing, and Quest/Star, among others. This is the first sale to IAsfm.*

*art:* Broeck Steadman



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4:20 A.M.

The Earth was condemned at 4:20.

Howard grabbed the phone and dialed Washington.

"CIA, Mrs. Williams. Can I help you?"

"Put Toon on the phone. This is Howard Koffman."

"Who?"

"Howard Koffman. I've got one of the aliens living with me. We're in Monroe, Connecticut. You've got to hurry. This is an emergency."

"One moment please. I'll connect you with the Special Projects Branch."

Howard grunted and looked nervously around the room. An umbrella of yellow light from the small desk lamp enveloped Beth and Rodney as they kneeled on the floor in their pajamas. Their ashen faces were bathed in a sickly yellow. Behind them, the mute alien squatted in the shadows.

A minute passed, then another, and a third. "CIA. Special Projects Branch. Karla Peters. Can I help you?"

"This is Howard Koffman. I've got an alien living with me. Put Agent Toon on the phone."

"Mr. Toon is on vacation, skiing in Colorado. Can I take a message?"

Howard could barely contain himself. He gripped the phone so hard he thought he'd crush it. "Listen to me, dammit. I'm living with one of the !Pfisen, and I've got a terrible problem here. Do you understand? Get me someone in authority."

"Mr. Koffman, it's four-thirty in the morning. Everyone in authority is sleeping."

"Then wake them up, for crying out loud!"

"One moment please."

Five long minutes dragged by before Karla Peters returned. "Go ahead, please."

"Koffman?" a tired voice asked. "This is Agent Ostranski. What seems to be the problem?"

"It's the aliens. They say we don't fit in the galaxy. They're going to turn us into vegetables. They . . ."

"Wait a minute. Slow down. How do I know you really have an alien with you. You may be . . ."

"Don't you people have records? The name is Koffman. Howard Koffman. I live in Monroe, Connecticut. I have a son and a dau . . ."

"Hold on a minute, will you, Koffman?"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howard stared at his wife. "I can't believe this. The world is coming to an end, and they put me on hold."

Three minutes later, Agent Ostranski returned. He sounded angry. "Listen to me, Koffman—or whoever the hell you are. If you ever try a stunt like this again, I'll personally see to it that you are thrown in jail."

"What are you talking about? Why don't you . . ."

"Howard Koffman and his family are sleeping soundly at this very moment."

Howard stared at the phone. "That's impossible."

"Every home with an alien is bugged. Every room is videotaped twenty-four hours a day. Do you think we'd allow a bunch of alien creatures to walk around unobserved?"

"They never told us," Howard said weakly.

Ostranski ignored him. "Everyone in the Koffman house is sleeping. I can see it with my own two eyes."

"It's a trick," Howard said, suddenly springing back to life. "I don't know how they're doing it, but they're fooling you. Trace this call; you'll see it's coming from the Koffman house."

Ostranski sighed. "We already have. You're calling from a phone booth in Lubbock, Texas."

"But . . ."

Howard heard the receiver click. He stared dumbly at the mouthpiece, something he'd seen Jack Lemmon do many times in his movies. Then he replaced it gently back on the receiver. His family looked at him expectantly, but Howard shook his head sadly and stared at the lethargic hulk that squatted on his living room carpet. When he had received that letter over five months before, he never anticipated anything like this. On the contrary, Howard Koffman had been euphoric . . .

Howard would have been the first to admit that his initial reaction to the letter was petty and childish, but he couldn't help it; he loved to get his digs in on Michelson. So on that lovely day in June, Howard ambled out to his neighbor's yard, where he found Michelson at his usual Saturday morning post, shining his Mercedes.

"It's lookin' good," Howard offered.

"It should," Michelson replied. "I spend enough time on it. How's your Mark IV holding up?"

*Holding up*? The car's only three years old. Michelson wouldn't own a car *that* old. Howard ignored his comment. "Guess who's coming to dinner?" he grinned, waving an official looking letter.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sidney Poitier."

"Very funny."

"So? Who's coming to dinner? Your daughter engaged or something?

"We've been chosen to have an alien stay with us."

Michelson hardly flinched as he applied a gob of paste wax to the left fender. "You'd better get some room deodorizer."

"You applied too, didn't you, George?" Howard asked accusingly.

Michelson shrugged. "It wasn't exactly a high priority in my life."

Sour grapes, eh, Michelson? "I understand that over two million families applied for the thirty-seven spots in the States. I guess we passed the psychological tests with flying colors."

"You may be sane enough, Howard, but personally I think you're crazy to let one of those creatures in your house."

"Why? They don't bite."

"We really don't know what they do."

"You sound scared, George."

Michelson studied his reflection in the gleaming, tan Mercedes. "Sure I'm scared. We don't know a damned thing about them."

"Are you implying that they might want to take over the Earth?"

"It's entirely possible."

"But what reasons would they have? There are more than enough planets out there. Why bother with Earth? Besides, if they had wanted to zap us out of existence, they could have done it a long time ago."

"But they're aliens, Howard. Who knows what weird things go on in their minds. Maybe they have an innate aversion to pink-skinned creatures who fight wars. Maybe we have a rare mineral they need. Maybe they want to eat us! And even worse, maybe everything they've told us about themselves is a lie."

"George, if you were so worried about being served up in tomorrow's lunch, then why did you apply?"

Michelson shrugged. "I hadn't really thought it all through. But the fact of the matter is that they've been here for almost a year but we don't know beans about them."

"Sure we do, they're—"

"I know, I know," Michelson cut in. "They're oxygen-breathers, they come from ninety light-years away, they've colonized a few thousand planets, and they look like cylindrical dogs with elephant skin. But what do we *really* know? How do they live? What



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are their customs? What do they do on Saturday night. See what I mean. We don't know anything about them. And even if they told us, we couldn't be sure they were telling the truth."

Howard rubbed the back of his neck and stared absently at a stray cat that crouched in his tree. "We'll be having a cocktail party in the alien's honor. Then you can ask him all the questions you want."

Howard turned to go. The cat lunged at a sparrow which fluttered away without a scratch. Sometimes Howard just hated George Michelson.

Howard spent a restless week filled with nightmares about !Pfisen chewing on his family. Was he really going to leave Amy and the kids home alone with one of those creatures?

He had trouble keeping his mind on his current murder case. Howard was sure the kid was guilty and equally sure he could plant that seed of reasonable doubt in the minds of the jurors. Sometimes he felt uneasy working so hard to free a murderer, but he always brushed it off with the standard rationalization: everyone is entitled to a defense. That's the way the system worked. When Howard was in the army, he almost never had an innocent client to defend. They were all guilty of rape, murder, or drug use. Yet he succeeded in getting a few of them off. Howard loved to win. That's why he was a successful lawyer.

But now his mind was on other things. When the government agent visited the following Saturday to brief the family, Howard had plenty of questions. His daughter, Beth, however, had other plans, "I have a date for the baseball game," she announced.

Howard gritted his teeth. "But I *told* you not to make plans for today. You *have to* stay home."

Beth brushed her wispy brown hair back with a nervous gesture. "But what can I tell James?"

"Tell him you have a date with a five feet four inch humanoid creature who has a face full of folded gray skin and who smells like rotten fish. You're sure to make him jealous."

The government man, Stephen Toon, was young, smart, and neat. He told them what they already knew, that the !Pfisen were benevolent beings who only wanted to learn about humans.

"But what have we learned from them?" Howard asked.

"To be honest, Mr. Koffman, not much. That's where you come in. Your family is going to be living with an intelligent creature from ninety light-years away. Keep your eyes open, ask questions, probe."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why haven't you people asked questions?" Howard's wife, Amy, asked.

"Oh, we have," Toon replied with a pearly white smile. "But communication is far from perfect. Their translators work well enough, but there are many words, ideas, and concepts on both sides that are difficult to get across. For example, we asked them for pictures of their world, but they had no idea what we meant. It seems that art, photography, music, and all other forms of aesthetics and entertainment are unknown to them. Even when we showed them samples of photographs, they couldn't actually see the pictures. It was just a jumble of color to them, because they had no frame of reference upon which to base a perception. Imagine giving a pen to a primitive native. He could see the thing, touch it, and even make marks with it, but because he never conceived of writing, it would have no functional reality."

"It seems like we have very little in common with them." Howard said.

Toon lit a cigarette. "Perhaps, but they claim that we do have much in common. The very fact that we can communicate at all indicates that we are more or less psychologically attuned. According to the !Pfisen, the galaxy is teeming with intelligent life, but only certain types of species can communicate. The others are so alien that there is no common framework of reality upon which to exchange ideas. We obviously have some problems communicating, but considering they are a totally different life form, I'd say we are getting along quite well."

Howard grimaced skeptically. "Could they be sandbagging?"

"Pardon?"

"I mean do you think they may be faking their inability to communicate in order to keep things from us?"

"Possibly, but I doubt it. They've told us quite frankly that they have been nosing around the galaxy for a long, long time, and they've learned to tread lightly with new species. Technological shock can be devastating. Look what alcohol and guns did to the Indians."

"True," Howard agreed. "But the horse was an innovation to the Indians also, and they took to it like a hand in a glove."

Toon smiled, and opened his palms in a retreating gesture. "Believe me, Mr. Koffman, we would all like to learn a few tricks from the !Pfisen, but for the time being, all we can do is wait and watch."

* * *



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Koffman family milled around nervously when Agent Toon introduced the !Pfisen at their cocktail party.

"Welcome to our home," Howard said, feeling absurd.

The alien stared blankly at them with dull, red eyes. The translator box around the !Pfisen's "neck" chirped and gurgled for a full ten seconds. The alien followed with a six second series of chirps, whistles and clicks, which the translator absorbed, hesitated and then presented in a tinny, sing-songy voice as, "understood."

The Koffman's all turned to Agent Toon. "Their translators work slowly. Remember, it has to deal with more than just words. Concepts, perceptions, psychology, connotation and the subleties of culture must all be considered and converted."

"What is your name," Amy asked, enunciating each word.

Everyone shifted uncomfortably as the box gurgled and chirped. The alien responded with a single whistle, which translated as, "I am from the Highland Clan, Sector of the Ridge."

"But what is your actual name?" Amy persisted. "What should we call you?"

Four minutes of clicks and chirps back and forth elicited. "I am from the Highland Clan, Sector of the Ridge. I have no individual reference."

"Can we call you *Hi*?" Rodney Koffman asked, adjusting his glasses.

A seven-second whistle translated as "Yes."

"Do you have any questions?" Howard asked carefully.

A one second chirp provided the answer of "Yes."

Howard shook his head. "I don't get it. Why did it take him so long to say "yes" the first time, while only one chirp was needed the next time?"

The translator box was already gurgling and clicking. Agent Toon nodded at the !Pfisen. "Why not let him explain?"

"Our language is based upon both sound and situation. In order to express an idea, we must consider whether it is within Clan or inter-Clan, between young or old, between male and female, or any combination of these factors. There are hundreds of different tones and combinations of tones to express any given idea, and each tone has a subtly unique connotation from all the others."

The !Pfisen demonstrated a few sounds, and then politely answered questions as the guests munched on celery stalks and cheese and sipped drinks. The long gaps between questions and answers were accompanied by impatient shuffling, and it seemed



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the answers weren't worth waiting for. The !Pfisen spoke in generalities. When pushed, he sidestepped the issues by claiming difficulty in translating. Eventually, the guests lost interest.

George Michelson sidled up to Howard and nodded at *Hi*. His breath reeked from too much alcohol. "He's not exactly a barrel of laughs, is he?"

"He's not here to entertain us, George."

"True, but he shows a decided lack of interest in what's going on. I mean, they claim to want to learn about us, but all he does is answer questions and stare at the walls."

"Maybe he doesn't know what to ask. Everything must be strange to him. He needs time to adjust."

Michelson didn't buy it. "Naa, they know enough. I think he's just got a case of the dulls."

"Something's wrong," someone said. "He's not responding."

All eyes turned to the alien. He squatted motionlessly in the middle of the living room floor; his red eyes were glazed.

"He's sleeping," Beth said.

"No, they don't sleep," Howard replied. "They just sort of turn off when the mood strikes them. He's fully conscious, but he won't respond."

"How can a creature go without sleep?" Michelson snorted.

Howard shrugged. "It seems they spend at least half their lives in that turned-off state. Sometimes they stay like that for weeks at a time. Even when they are fully functioning, there is a minimum of action."

"How in the world did they gain a space travel technology being so lethargic?" Michelson wondered as he sipped another drink.

"Time," Howard answered. "They've had civilization for hundreds of thousands of years, maybe even a million. Given that much time, and a reasonably good brain, they eventually just drifted into it."

Michelson stumbled around the alien and looked into its dull, red eyes. "Let's see if he's really awake," he said with an impish grin. "Hey leather face, why don't you wake up and talk to us. That's what you came here for, isn't it?"

"You better be careful, George," Howard warned. "He hears everything."

Michelson addressed Howard but kept his eyes on the !Pfisen. "He may be awake, ole buddy, but his squawk box is quiet."

"I think the box records everything and passes it on to him silently. He may not like you calling him leather face."

"Don't worry, Howard, they have no concept of insult. I read



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*that* in *Time* Magazine. They don't have humor either, or movies or music or art or novels. Isn't that right, leather face?"

The alien remained perfectly still. His breathing was barely perceptible. The other guests began drifting out. After the last one left, the !Pfisen clicked on. His eyes brightened.

"Michelson-Clan is incorrect. I understand the concept of insult. We have seen it on many planets."

"I'm sorry," Howard said.

"Do not be sorry. It was expected, quite typical of the Lost Peoples, a concomitant of a competitive system."

"What do you mean, 'Lost Peoples'?" Amy asked.

"Those who have come before," the !Pfisen answered.

Howard and Amy exchanged glances. "Come before what?" Howard asked.

"Before us. Those who have come and gone."

"You're talking in riddles," Amy said. "Please explain."

"Another time," said the !Pfisen, who retreated into his stupor.

"The alien speaks with forked tongue," Michelson joked the next morning after Howard related the previous night's conversation. They talked over the fence that separated their properties. Both lawns were being sprayed by automatic sprinkler systems. The late morning sun was hot. Up in the tree, the stray cat crouched patiently.

"Wait, there's more," Howard said. "We got off to a roaring start this morning."

"I'm all ears," said Michelson, wiggling his eyebrows.

"Well, Beth came storming into our room this morning. It seems our friend dropped in on her for an early-morning chat. He wanted to know when she was going to *mate*."

"That's not an unreasonable question."

"Oh, no. Then listen to this. He asked her when she was going to mate with her brother."

"The alien has no couth at all."

"So Beth runs into our room with the alien floating along in hot pursuit. I could tell he was excited because the fish smell got a little hard to take, and his eyes looked like stoplights."

Michelson grinned. "Well, you know how it is, sex rears its ugly head."

"Anyway, old *Hi* asked me about it and I explained that incest was taboo all over the world, that it was universally abhorred. By this time the fish smell was so sickening that I had to open the window. He whistled and chirped and clicked, which trans-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lated as 'Incredible.' He said it several times. He was really impressed by the fact that we don't screw our daughters."

"I hope you asked him to explain himself."

"Of course I did, and what he told me was really mind-boggling. He said that we are unique; that there are no known civilized species in the galaxy that practice non-incest sex. Absolutely none."

Michelson stared coldly at Howard. "Did he say anything else?"

Howard nodded. "Before he clicked off, he said that the Lost Peoples must have been non-incest also; he said that they had been looking for this explanation for thousands of years. I couldn't wait to get outside into the fresh air."

"Quiet," Michelson warned, looking over Howard's shoulder. "Here he comes."

The alien seemed to float across the lawn, propelled by hundreds of tiny cilia on the undersides of his cylindrical torso. The cilia were encased in an artificial, translucent material, which was the !Pfisen equivalent of a shoe.

The alien clicked and whistled without preamble. "I have been in contact with other members of my Clan, and they confirm what you have told me."

"Tell me something, leather face," Michelson said from his side of the fence. "Why do you practice incest?"

"It is the way of all life."

"Not here, it isn't," Michelson said.

Chirps and clicks. "I know. I am intrigued and disgusted."

"Well, pardon me," said Michelson with dripping sarcasm. "But your incest is downright repulsive to us."

The fish smell intensified. The cat in the tree looked down at the trio and sniffed.

"I understand," the !Pfisen said. "We both have long periods of evolution behind us in which these procreation systems have developed. For us to mate outside the Clan would be as repulsive to us as incest would be to you. I cannot comprehend non-Clan bonding. Nothing is sweeter than to mate with one who shares my blood; with one whom I grew from infancy; with one who shares my psychic being. Only with a mother or sister can intimacy have meaning. To mate with a mother who provided nurturing care from birth is the greatest ecstasy, but to mate beyond one's blood is an abomination so repulsive as to be barely conceivable. And yet it explains the fate of the Lost Peoples."

"Just who are these Lost Peoples?" Howard asked.

The red glow in the !Pfisen's eyes faded and the fish smell



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

subsided. "The galaxy has many dead civilizations," the alien explained through the tinny voice of the translator box. "They all destroyed themselves before attaining interstellar travel. They were weeded out by a galactic natural selection process. We never understood how the process operated, but now that we have visited your world, the system is explained. How long do you think it will be before you destroy yourselves?"

Michelson shrugged and looked at his watch. "Oh, not before lunch time."

"You must be mistaken!" the !Pfisen said, filling the air with a pungent odor.

Michelson reconsidered. "Well, I hope the end comes before three, because I was planning to mow the lawn, and I need an excuse not to do it."

"That is impossible," the alien exclaimed with a flurry of chirps and gurgles. "Our information indicates no such impending incident."

Michelson turned to Howard. "How about coming over for a game of bridge before the holocaust?"

Howard was staring at the alien. "I don't think it's funny, George. It scares the hell out of me."

"I don't think it's funny either," Michelson shot back. "But I don't believe it." He gestured at the lethargic alien. "Look at him, Howard. He doesn't have the vaguest idea of what makes us tick. Just because other creatures have destroyed themselves doesn't mean we will. Just because a bunch of bug-eyed monsters blow themselves up a hundred light years from us, doesn't mean that we will. There's simply no link. A judgment like that is absurd."

The alien received the translated message and sent back one of his own. "Nothing can be done to reverse the natural selection process. All the rapidly advancing races have perished before they could spread their destructive tendencies. Not a single one has survived. It is a galactic safeguard. The stars must be left for normal species."

An icy chill enveloped the two men. Howard glared at the alien. "Why did you come here? Why did you !Pfisen come to Earth?"

The alien whistled and clicked a response. "We have seen thousands of destroyed planets of the Lost Peoples but have never come upon one still alive and at the technological flash point. It is a rare opportunity to observe the process of self-removal at close range."

Michelson ground his teeth together. "A *rare* opportunity. Did you hear what he said, Howard? We're a *rare* opportunity."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howard said nothing. His mind was numb. Up in the tree, the stray cat jumped at a sparrow, but the bird easily flew away. Howard rubbed the bridge of his nose. Then he went off to adjust the lawn sprinkler and wax his car.

A week passed. The media drowned the public in "alien" stories, but there was no mention of "Lost Peoples," or "Galactic Natural Selection." Howard contacted Agent Toon, who flew in from Washington.

Toon was reassuring. "We know all about that stuff," he told Howard.

"Then why haven't I heard about it in the media?"

"It's not the kind of thing we want to publicize. For once, the major media outfits are cooperating. Besides, the !Pfisen aren't telling us anything we don't already know. We *can* blow ourselves up if we're not careful."

"But they are telling us things we don't know," Howard countered. "Like a universe full of dead planets. And incest. And galactic natural selection. What sense can you make out of all that?"

Toon shrugged. "It's hard to figure."

"I can always ask the alien."

A flicker of annoyance crossed Agent Toon's face. "Actually, we have pieced together something of a theory, but it's not much more than a guess."

"Go on," Howard urged.

"Well, according to what they say, we intra-breeding species create a race of snowflakes; each individual is unique. As a result, our species has creativity, initiative, ingenuity, and originality. We've also inbred aggressiveness and belligerence as necessary survival traits. The result is a dynamic race of billions of individual beings, each representing a unique blend of genes, each competing and aggressive, and each adding originality to the entire human pool. We advance rapidly because of our competitiveness and originality, but that advance must be linked to aggressiveness which ultimately leads to self-destruction.

"They, on the other hand, inbreed, which creates stagnation. Originality and independent thought do not exist. They are like clones, all thinking and acting alike. Because they lack variety and the competitive spirit, progress is almost nonexistent."

"Then how do you explain their space-travel technology?"

Toon offered a pearly smile. "Time. It's like the old story about putting a monkey in front of a typewriter. Given enough time, the monkey will, by chance, tap out all the words in the dictionary,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or write every one of Shakespeare's plays. The !Pfisen weren't driven to invent, but over hundreds of thousands of years they simply drifted into it. It has probably taken them a hundred thousand years to achieve what we did in five."

"OK," Howard agreed. "I understand that. But what is the link between that and the galactic natural selection process they are so excited about?"

"This is where we are really guessing," Toon said. "The !Pfisen seem to think that nature wants to be sure that crazies like us don't infect the rest of the galaxy. We advance fast because we have variety and aggressiveness, but we kill ourselves for the same reasons. We can't possibly gain interstellar travel because to reach that level we must first pass through atomic power, at which point we self-destruct. A natural safety valve."

"What is the government doing about all this?" Howard asked.

Toon raised his palms and grimaced thoughtfully. "There's not much we can do. The Russians are getting the same story. So are the Chinese, the French, the Arabs, and everyone else. Maybe we'll all be scared into keeping our fingers off the buttons."

"Maybe," Howard muttered. "Maybe."

Summer melded into Fall. The first snow fell. Stories began leaking to the press, but the public was surprisingly blasé. Threats of atomic war were old. The aliens were dull and had nothing to offer. Most people returned to their own little worlds of problems.

Howard trudged off to work everyday. He succeeded in earning an acquittal for a rapist and got a murderer off with a light sentence. In both cases he was able to plant that insidious little seed of reasonable doubt, which led the jury to feel that maybe, just maybe, the accused might be innocent.

The alien (the name *Hi* just didn't fit) became a permanent fixture in the Koffman house. Most of the time it turned off and was ignored. Occasionally, it asked questions . . .

Howard Koffman crept quietly down the stairs at one o'clock in the morning and headed straight for the refrigerator. He ignored the alien, who squatted in his usual stupor. Howard sliced some Thanksgiving turkey from the two day old carcass, smeared some cold gravy on rye bread, and made himself a sandwich. A mound of sweet potatoes and a coke rounded it off.

It was shaping up to be another night of nightmares; atomic



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wars, aliens and Lost Peoples were disrupting his sleep. Howard preferred a midnight snack to bad dreams.

He was just about to sink his teeth into the turkey sandwich when he heard the familiar gurgles and chirps of the !Pfisen. He finished his bite and waited patiently for the translation.

"Why do you not sleep?"

"Bad dreams."

"What do you dream?"

"That the Earth was destroyed."

"Why does that upset you?"

Howard stared at the alien. "Because . . . because I don't want to die. Because I don't want the human race to die."

"How strange you are. For us death has no meaning. If an individual unit dies, there are hundreds of thousands of duplicates. Nothing changes."

"You must really think we're insane," Howard said.

"Yes, self-destruction is not normal."

"Good God," Howard bristled. "We're not going to kill ourselves. Life is too precious to us."

The alien said nothing.

"Did you hear me?" Howard persisted. "You're not going to witness the destruction of Earth."

The alien turned slowly, its rippled, leathery snout a mask. "*God*. I often hear this word and derivatives of it, but the meaning is unclear. What is God?"

Howard stopped chewing and looked at the visitor from ninety light-years away. How does one explain God to an alien creature? He dredged up a phrase that seemed to fit. "God is the Supreme Power of the universe, the Ultimate Good."

"Where is He located?"

Howard thought for a moment. "He's everywhere at once."

"Impossible."

"Many things about God are impossible. That's why He's God."

"We have been to many star systems, but have not found this Ultimate Good."

"He's there," Howard said without conviction.

"How do you know?"

"Faith."

"What is faith?"

"Acceptance without proof."

"That is inconsistent with fast-paced, technological cultures."

Howard smiled. "I guess that means we're different."

The !Pfisen's eyes burned red, and the fish smell intensified.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howard took a silent satisfaction in knowing he had captured the alien's interest.

"What does God do?" the !Pfisen asked.

"He tries to make everyone good and kind and charitable, just like He is. He watches over all of us."

"Then He has failed," said the !Pfisen, with what seemed like a sigh of relief.

"But he hasn't failed with everyone," Howard was quick to point out.

"Yet how can a Supreme Power fail at all? By its very definition it must succeed."

"I don't know much about God," Howard replied. "But I think He wants each of us to decide for ourselves what to do. Naturally He hopes we do the right things, but He doesn't force us."

The !Pfisen's eyes smoldered and the fish smell filled the room. Howard opened the window and breathed in the cold, snowy air.

"How many beings in your world have this faith in the Ultimate Good?" the !Pfisen asked.

Howard shrugged. "I'm not sure. There are many different kinds of religions, and each one looks at God differently. But I would guess that just about everyone has some kind of faith."

Now the !Pfisen was shuddering. Howard sat by the open window, preferring the cold air to the overpowering odor. After an intense flurry of gurgles, clicks and whistles, the translator box asked, "How long have your people had this faith in the Ultimate Good?"

"Always. All people in all times and all places have worshipped some kind of God."

The alien floated across the room on its cilia, turned, and floated back. Its eyes were like red beacons. Howard had never seen the !Pfisen move like that. It floated back and forth three times. The only sound was the soft swish of its cilia, and the patter of snowflakes on the window. Suddenly it stopped and began chirping, whistling and gurgling, but no translation issued from the box. The sustained noise woke up Amy, Beth and Rodney, who raced down to the kitchen where the alien continued to "talk" and float across the room. It probably expended more energy in this outburst than in all the time it had spent with the Koffmans.

When the !Pfisen finally quieted, after an hour of agitation, it floated into the living room where the bleary-eyed family waited, and it began to speak.

"I have been in contact with other !Pfisen around your world. They confirm what you have told me. You are unique among the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lost Peoples of the galaxy. You are the only ones who conceived of non-aggression. You are the only ones that recognized the evil of killing and attempted to control it. You alone among the fast-paced races conceived of charity, altruism and peace. And most important, throughout your civilized history you have been guided by the moral restraint of an Ultimate Good.

"This indicates to our Logicians that you will survive. You are a paradox; a galactic anomaly. You will upset the natural selection process of the galaxy. This we cannot allow."

Howard's head spun. "What does that mean?"

"You must be stopped."

"Do you mean to kill us?"

"No. That is impossible. We are incapable of destroying."

Howard's skin began to crawl. He was strangely calm. "What do you intend to do?"

"Correct the inconsistency; change your habits. Make you like us."

"You mean dull, lifeless, uncreative?"

"Yes. And incestuous."

"But that would be like death."

The !Pfisen hesitated. "I do it with regret. I have come to feel for you an affinity. I would offer you . . . Howard . . . my Clanship, the greatest honor and love one being can bestow upon another. But I also recognize that you and your people are a danger to the less dynamic species of the galaxy. Nature is out of balance. It must be corrected."

Howard felt himself being pulled apart by conflicting emotions. He wanted to go to sleep; to crawl into bed and let the darkness take him far away. Instead, he fought back. "I don't understand how you can make a decision like that so quickly. It's only been about two hours since you realized we were different."

"Yes, but we suspected it from the time we arrived. !Pfisen from the Sector of the Valley, who are the Logicians, suggested the possibility. We of the Sector of the Ridge are Decision Makers. Half the !Pfisen on Earth are Logicians, half are Decision Makers. I am the leader."

"You!" Howard cried in disbelief.

"Yes, but not in the manner you perceive. Because we inbreed, we of a particular Sector are of like mind. My faction of the Clan have been Decision-Makers since the beginning of time. We do not know why; it has always been. I am the Final Decision Maker. I have decided."

"You've decided to kill us!"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It will be better for you, for all of us. In precisely eight hours the process will begin. There is nothing you can do to stop it. It will be painless and take several generations to be fully effective. In the end, the natural order will be restored."

Howard's voice came out as a hoarse whisper. "You condemn us to death because we believe in God and because we try to keep from murdering each other. You destroy us because we strive to be better. What an incredible irony."

The !Pfisen's clicks, gurgles and whistles were muted. "If there is an Ultimate Good, then perhaps he will intervene." His eyes glazed over as he turned himself off.

Howard glanced at the luminous numbers of the digital clock. 4:20. The Earth was condemned to death at 4:20.

Howard grabbed the phone and dialed Washington.

The Koffmans watched the sun rise on the last day; a round, misty, orange ball that splashed its color across the snowy streets. They all agreed it was beautiful.

They drifted to breakfast and ate piles of pancakes and bacon. Howard and Amy told the kids about their first date. This time the kids listened. They talked about Beth's college applications. Rodney claimed he wanted turkey for desert. Howard gagged. Everyone laughed.

7:31

Michelson was up early with his kids, building a snowman in the yard. Howard put on his boots, gloves, and muffler, and ambled out to join them. The sky was a slate gray with the promise of more snow. Michelson's kids romped and rolled in the fluffy white stuff. Howard wondered what the next generation would do with the snow; stare at it, most likely.

As he crossed over to Michelson's yard, a squawk in the tree caught his attention. He turned upward to see the cat pounce on the bird. Its razor sharp teeth crushed through bone and feathers. Blood spurted upon the snow laden branch.

Today everything dies, Howard thought.

"Morning, George."

"Morning, Howard. How's old leather face today?"

"Sleeping."

"You look tired," Michelson observed.

Howard shrugged. "I was up late watching T.V."

"Anything good on?"

"Naa, the usual. Johnny Carson."

"Looks like more snow," Michelson said conversationally.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howard just stared at him.

"Is there something bothering you, Howard? You look damned poor."

"We've been lousy neighbors to each other, haven't we?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I mean the petty bullshit, the one-upsmanship, that sort of thing."

"My gosh, Howard, there is something bothering you."

"Life is too short for those kinds of stupidities. We're all on a life-long ego trip. That's what makes us different from the !Pfisen. Maybe they *are* better than us."

Michelson stared dumbly at Howard. "What in the world's gotten into you?"

Howard shook his head. He wanted to cry. "None of it matters any more, George." He turned to go. Michelson stared after him. "Take care of yourself, Howard."

Howard glanced at the bloodied branch. There was no trace of the bird. He blinked. A thought flitted through his mind. Then it was gone.

9:10

The fact that it was Sunday morning did not deter the shoppers at the New England Shopping Mall. Pantry Pride was already crowded when the Koffmans arrived at 10:29. Howard and his family walked slowly down the broad aisles, filling their cart with goods. Most of it was junk food, the stuff they usually avoided.

They browsed around the books and magazines, bought some fresh rolls, drifted.

Howard figured it would happen around the time they reached the check-out counter; when the girl registered the cost of the steaks or the spinach or the granola bars or the Pepperidge Farm chocolate layer cake.

What did they say about the world going out with a whimper?

They passed through the pet food department. A happy, grinning cat stared at Howard from a huge bag of Purina Cat Chow. His mind drifted . . .

Something . . .

The supermarket dimmed, became surreal.

Howard stared blankly at Amy, unable to articulate his thoughts.

Then he was running down the aisle, across the snow packed parking lot to his car.

11:23. Fifty-seven minutes.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The roads were slippery, traffic light. The snow tires gave him decent traction. He gripped the wheel and accelerated.

Howard was certain he could convince the alien to halt the process. The lawyer in him *knew* he had a case. All he had to do was plant that seed of reasonable doubt.

A red light at Chester Street took him by surprise. He jammed on the brakes, skidded, swerved into a parked car and cut back through the red light.

Howard almost enjoyed the wild ride. He had rarely been cited for a moving violation. He had been a Babbit.

51 minutes.

A siren.

A cop car flagging him down. Good God. What could he tell the cop? I'm running home to save the human race?

Howard eased to a halt. The flashing red light blinked off. The cop parked about ten yards behind. Howard jumped out and ran back to meet him. He had read somewhere that cops were placated by subservient behavior.

The police officer was a big, burly man in his mid fifties. "License and registration," he said with amiable authority.

Howard already had them out. The officer looked them over with painful slowness. Then he turned to Howard who was sweating heavily in the cold, morning air. "You've been drivin' recklessly. Had much ta drink this 'mornin'?"

"No, nothing at all. I guess I'm just in a big hurry."

The officer curled his beefy face into a grimace. He'd been around a long time. Something was amiss. "You smashed up a guy's car back there. You know that?"

"It was an accident. I skidded on the snow."

"You smashed into the guy and then took off. Now we gotta drive back and find the guy that you were gonna screw."

"Look, officer, I'd be glad to pay. I'll write a check for whatever you think it costs; maybe leave a bit for your trouble. I'm really in a big hurry."

Before the words were out, Howard knew he had said the wrong thing. The big cop turned crimson. He eyed the expensive Mark IV and snarled, "You rich turkeys think you can buy the world. Well, you're gonna get your ass in my car and we're gonna go back and find the son-of-a-bitch whose car you smashed. And that's just for openers."

Howard was stunned into inaction, but within seconds the cop gave him an out. "Pull it over to the side while I call in."

Howard watched the cop stride back to his squad car. Without



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even stopping to think about what he was doing, Howard ignited his engine and raced off. His car was fast. He knew the streets. He could shake the cop.

He glanced at his watch. 41 minutes.

Howard cut sharply to the right and sped down Wantagh Avenue; then a quick left onto Homestead, which led into a school yard. The snow had not been cleared in the yard, but he managed to slide across to the back gate. It was closed. He spun the car around and headed for the entrance. The police car roared into the yard and passed Howard, who quickly exited. The police car skidded, spun completely around, and exited in hot pursuit.

Howard drove back to Wantagh for a block and cut into the King Kullen-parking lot, hoping to exit in the back and disappear down the side streets. He heard the siren wailing behind him. People in the parking lot looked at him suspiciously.

Howard drove with aching slowness down the parking lot aisle. An old VW bug backed out. Howard jammed on the brakes. The driver rolled down his window and poked his head out. He was swarthy, low browed, and chewing gum. Howard knew the type; tattoo on the arms macho.

The sirens grew louder. A police car entered the parking lot. Howard hit the horn. The macho-type got out and hitched up his pants. The cop closed in from behind. Howard drove his car into the bug, pushed it out of the way, eased around it, and sped out of the rear exit. The cop was right behind.

36 minutes.

*I'll have to kill the cop.* It wasn't so much a thought as an intuition. He wasn't thinking anymore. He was acting on an animal level; the very kind of animal the !Pfisen wanted to destroy. Somewhere in the recesses of his mind, vague thoughts danced. Am I just playing out some juvenile T.V. script? Am I insane? Am I a murderer?

*I'll have to kill the cop.*

Howard strapped his seatbelt as tight as possible. He was only a few streets from home. By now the police probably knew where he lived. His home might be swarming with cops. It might already be too late.

He eased to a halt and backed into someone's driveway. Almost immediately the police car rounded the corner. The policeman knew that Howard had to be on the street. He couldn't have escaped that quickly.

The police car edged slowly down the tree-lined avenue. Howard



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sat numbly, gripping the wheel. His face dripped with sweat. He was sick; ready to gag.

The driveway in which he waited like a beast of prey was hidden by shrubbery, but Howard knew that the veteran cop would be watching. Maybe his gun was already out.

The split second the front of the police car appeared, Howard gunned the engine. The heavy Mark IV smashed head on into the driver's seat . . . but not quite. At the last second Howard swerved to avoid killing him. He knew that sparing the cop might mean the end of humanity, but he couldn't do it. All of his upbringing, his values and his feelings for life made him move the wheel slightly. *And this is the irony*, he thought. *We are killers, but we're restrained killers*. We are unlike the Lost Peoples.

The policeman was stunned but not badly hurt. He was already making a move to get out. Howard backed up about twenty-five yards and accelerated at full speed. This time he hit the driver's side directly. He felt the crushing impact. Glass shattered over the cop who was pinned to the dashboard. His face was bloody and he seemed unconscious.

Doors opened along the street. Howard sped away but his car smoked and sputtered to a halt. He jumped out, and with muffler flying in the wind, clad in heavy boots and a heavy winter overcoat, he ran the remaining two blocks.

His lungs were bursting and his eyes were watery when he arrived at his front door. He reached for his keys but they weren't there. He left them in the car. His breath came in stacatto spurts. The cold air rushed in and out of his lungs like a bellows. He shook the door futilely and ran to the rear.

21 minutes.

His breathing slowed. Something to break a window with? But what? A shovel. He rammed it into the bedroom window but his blow was muted by the screen. He hacked away at it until the screen gave way and the windown shattered. Howard ripped his hands pulling back the torn screen and cut himself slithering through the jagged shards of the window frame.

Bleeding, panting and drenched in perspiration, he headed for the living room.

The alien was gone.

18 minutes.

"!Pfisen," he called. "!Pfisen, be here."

Howard heard chirps and gurgles from the kitchen. The alien's eyes glowed brightly, and the fish smell was very strong. In spite



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the situation, Howard smiled. "So the end of humanity is not so boring to you."

The translator paused, then relayed the message. Howard had forgotten how long it took to converse. The pauses had become so natural that he barely noticed them. Now they seemed an eternity.

"It is distasteful to me," the alien said.

"Listen to me, !Pfisen. You said that the galaxy has a natural selection process, that the fit trait for survival is a peaceful attitude. You also say that we will survive. Surely you see the flaw in your reasoning?"

"There is no flaw."

"Of course there is," Howard shot back before the translator had fully completed its message. "If we do not destroy ourselves, then it means that we were meant by nature to survive, that we are peaceful enough, that we have been naturally selected to travel to the stars. If you go against this then you are going against nature."

Clicks, whistles, and gurgles. "I understand. But although your survival may be natural, you represent a unique element, an unknown quantity. You would be the first fast-paced species to reach the stars. Your natural will and aggressiveness would lead you to a place of dominance. This could cause disaster and disorder."

"But we have a right to be part of this galactic order. You, who talk so much about nature should be aware of this. You insist that only races that *should* survive, *do* survive. If we make it, then we have been naturally selected to make it. We belong among the stars just the way we are!

"On our world," Howard continued, "We don't destroy every animal that preys on a weaker one. It is part of nature. Every cat that eats a bird seems evil, but that is the cat's right. He is only fitting into the natural scheme of things. It is part of the symbiotic process that makes for order."

"We are not killing you, only changing you. You will have your place among the stars, and the galaxy will be saved from potential destruction."

"Why do you assume the worst?" Howard retorted. "On Earth, every species has its place; fits perfectly into the life-and-death balance. Is it not the same on your world, where each Sector has a specialty? You Highland Ridge people are Decision Makers, while the Valley people are Logicians. In every natural order, each species has its place. Perhaps Earth, too, has a galactic role



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to play. You said yourself we are unique. Maybe we were meant to rule. Maybe the Earth "Sector" will bring innovation and life to the galaxy. I don't know. Neither do you. But my God, !Pfisen, we are brothers—Clansmen—together in the cosmos. We might bicker like neighbors, compete and judge each other, but don't condemn us for what we are. Don't sentence us to death because we believe in an Ultimate Good and try to restrain our aggressive impulses. Don't thwart nature."

A siren. It grew louder each second. The alien's eyes glowed like red beacons.

8 minutes.

"I must think," said the chief of the Highland Clan, Sector of the Ridge.

"Hurry, decide," Howard urged. "Hurry."

Now the siren shattered the air. Howard's head pounded. He no longer felt alive. Tires screeched outside. The siren abruptly stopped, filling the air with an ominous silence.

Howard looked around the house, but it was no longer his house, and he was no longer a man. His world didn't exist; maybe it never had.

"Koffman? You in there?"

The cop he had rammed. Still alive.

"Koffman, you son-of-a-bitch. I'm gonna burn ya."

Howard grabbed the alien by its leathery folds and put his face up to its snout. He was oblivious to the overpowering odor. "!Pfisen," he implored in a hoarse whisper. "!Pfisen, we have a God that tells us not to kill. We are not animals. !Pfisen, you and I are Clansmen. In the name of God, leave us alone."

The back door slammed open as the cop kicked his way in. The alien chirped and gurgled. Howard heard the cop panting. He stared dumbly at the kitchen door as the cop stormed into the room, his gun raised in front of him. The man's face was mottled with blood, glass and torn flesh. Saliva dribbled from his torn lip. He screamed at the sight of the alien and backed away, befuddled and frightened.

The alien floated towards the cop, gurgling and whistling. The cop raised his gun.

"Don't!" Howard cried, moving forward.

The cop snarled, raised his gun and put a bullet into Howard's right forehead. His last thought, strangely, was of Michelson, and what he would think of all this.

The alien, still advancing, caught four bullets and slumped over on its side.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

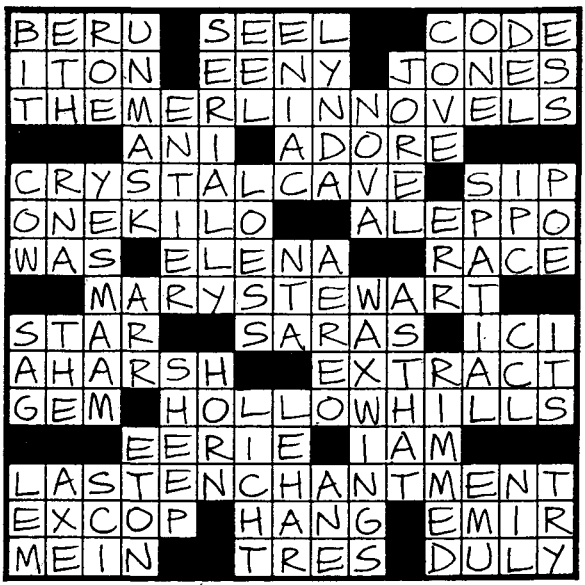
The cop backed out of the nightmare room. Behind him he heard the tinny voice of the translator box saying, "You are right, we are Clansmen. I stopped the process. We welcome you to be part of us."

12:20. The grandfather clock announced that the time of troubles for the galaxy was just beginning. ●

# IAsfm Puzzle #17

From page 25

## SOLUTION TO MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR






LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(From page 41)

# SECOND SOLUTION TO THE CASTRATI OF WOMENSA

The great plan was this: the husbands increased the number of their extramarital adventures at a steady rate. Thus each day after the decree was issued, the wives would learn of more infidelities than they knew about on the previous day. It is easy to see that this completely destroys the logic that the wives had used before, which had assumed that the number of unfaithful husbands remained constant after the decree.

The increasing infidelities would tend to enlarge the population of Womensa, which already had been growing rapidly. When you consider also the constant shifting of families in and out of the capital city, it is apparent that a steady rate of growth in the number of infidelities would postpone any action on the situation until the unfaithful husbands had died of old age without being punished.

The original problem (with a story line about forty unfaithful wives in an Arabian city ruled by a Sultan) first appeared in 1958 in an amusing little book called *Puzzle-Math*, by the physicist George Gamow in collaboration with Marvin Stern. The second problem is given here for the first time. It was sent to me many years ago by Thomas H. O'Beirne, a Glasgow mathematician, who credited it to his assistant Duncan P. Goudie.

A problem left unanswered last month was to arrange the ten digits (0 through 9) to form an improper fraction that equals 1984. The only way to do it is:

$$\frac{1857024}{936} = 1984$$

I am indebted to Stewart Metchette, of Culver City, California, for this. It is one of many similar problems in his article "Years Expressed as Distinct-digit Fractions," *Journal of Recreational Mathematics*, Volume 13, Number 1, 1980–81, pages 26–28.

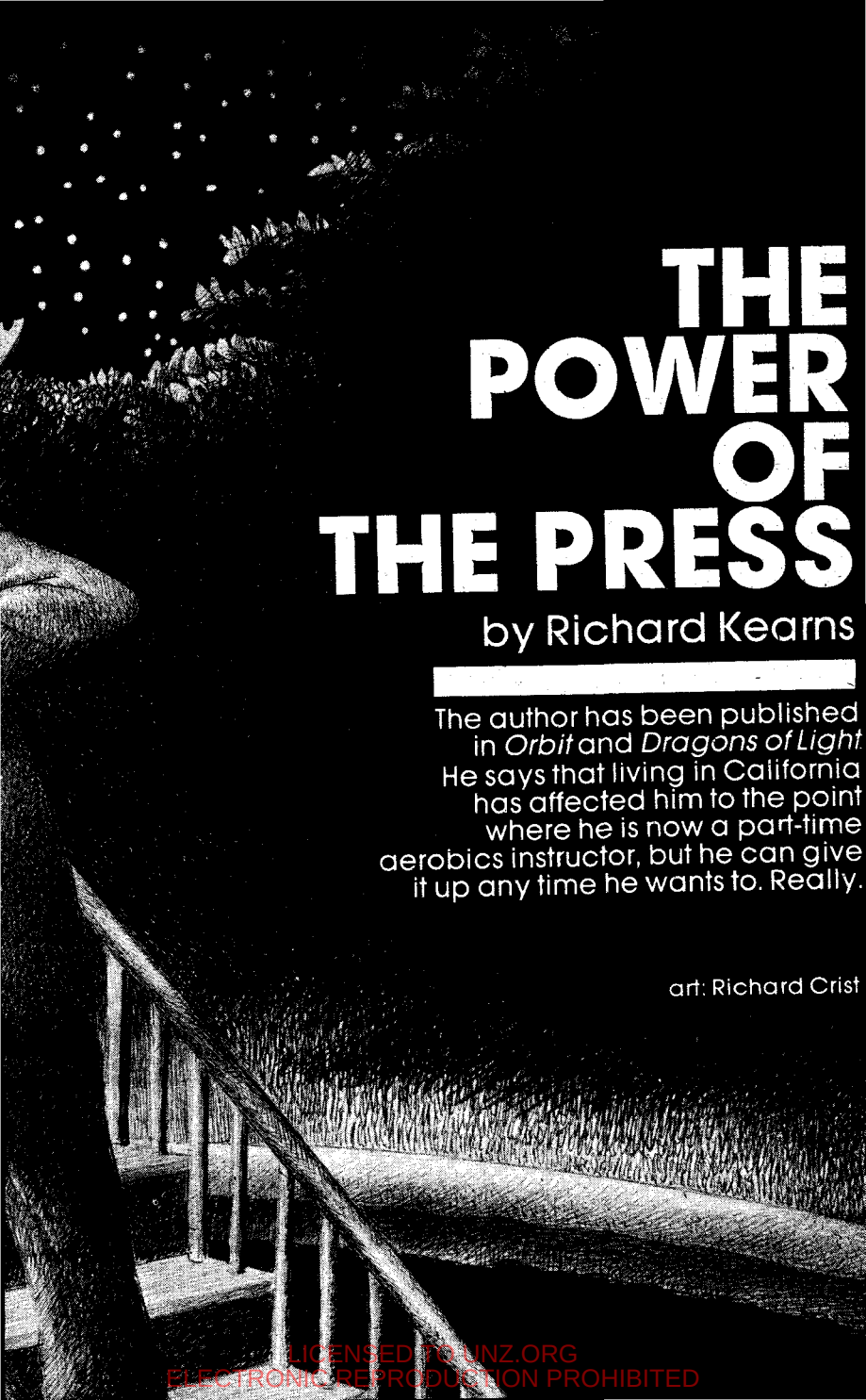
* * *

For our readership's response to the problem posed in "The Number of the Beast," the puzzle featured in the July issue of *IAsfm*, please turn to page 91.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



# THE POWER OF THE PRESS

by Richard Kearns

The author has been published in *Orbit* and *Dragons of Light*. He says that living in California has affected him to the point where he is now a part-time aerobics instructor, but he can give it up any time he wants to. Really.

art: Richard Crist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Old Willie had one newspaper left to sell before he closed up his stand for the night.

It had been a clear, pleasant spring day, and the smell of lilacs blooming in the park behind his newsstand had lingered in the air long after sundown, becoming somehow sweeter and fresher because of the chill that crept across town once the sun was gone. The stars overhead had come out quickly, putting on a spectacular display—red and blue-white and glittering like they hadn't done this side of winter. Nights like this Willie didn't mind waiting to sell the last paper, though most of the theatre crowd had been and gone by now. It was more of an excuse to stay out late and enjoy the evening.

So he had another swig of whiskey from his flask—just to keep the cold away—and continued to wait, huddled in the warmth of his overcoat and draped in the thin yellow light that fell from an old-fashioned granite-pillared streetlamp next to his stand. He listened to the quiet settle in around town, and heard different church bells toll ten, off in the distance.

"Good evening, Willie."

Willie jumped. "Ho, it's you, sir. Gave me quite a start there for a minute. I didn't hear you come up."

"I'm sorry," said the second man. He was tall—well over six feet—and youngish. He wore what appeared to be a black overcoat which was unbuttoned at the front and revealed a tuxedo within; but where the overcoat ended and night and shadow began was a difficult thing to say. There was a shapeless black hat sitting on his head, and the shadow of its brim cut across the man's face diagonally, making the one green eye that was left in the pale lamplight seem more alive than it should be. "Have you got a paper?" he asked.

"Just one, sir. I shoulda known it would be you that came for it."

The second man smiled—not a normal smile, mind you, but a smile that was bright and wide and had good quantities of white teeth and sunlight in it. He took off his hat and pulled out a crisp new twenty dollar bill, handing it to Willie. His hair was blonde and curly and fairly long. "Keep the change," he said, putting his hat on again. "Use it to buy whiskey for cold evenings."

Willie took the bill, chuckled, folded it in half, and stuck it in his overcoat pocket. "That I will, sir, and thank you very much." He gave the man the paper. "*Evening Sun*, too, just the way you like it, sir. You don't have to unfold four miles of paper to find



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out what's in the news, if you take my meaning. Not like the *Trib*."

The second man took the paper, hefted it to determine its weight, flipped through the pages, and smiled again. "This will do fine, thank you," he said. Then he turned and walked toward the park entrance, his boots making crisp, gritty sounds against the quiet of the night.

"I would be careful about going through the park if I was you, sir," Willie called out as he went about closing up.

The second man stopped. "Really?" he asked.

"Sure enough," said Willie. "It's been vandals and muggings something terrible this past month. Course, there's a park patrol now," and here the hinges of the stand groaned as he swung the big metal doors shut, "for what good they're worth."

"A park patrol?"

"Yes, sir. Just started last week." Willie snapped the padlock shut and wiped his hands on his coat. "But they're new at it," he added, "and I don't know as I would trust 'em to keep me safe."

"I shall remember that. Thank you."

"Good night to you, then, sir."

"Good night, Willie."

They headed in opposite directions.

Now the second man's name was Gideon Upton, and he had been around, to say the least. He had certainly been to the park after dark before, although his purpose here tonight was quite different from his usual one. He was a very capable individual and managed to get himself into and out of more trouble than Old Willie could ever imagine.

Still, the information about the vandals and the park patrol disturbed him. He was thoughtful as he walked along the broad sidewalk that served as one of the park's main thoroughfares. Rows of elm trees on either side of him stretched their newly leaf-clad branches over his head; their boughs met and meshed halfway across to form pointed archways, shutting out the moon and the stars above and creating a cathedral hallway down the length of the walk.

He passed streetlamps, like the one next to Willie's newsstand. These filled the avenue with a weak light, painting the scene in tones of yellow and grey and heightening the shadows. The wrought-iron park benches that lived along the way were dour, and disinclined to comment on the current situation.

So Gideon kept walking.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At first there were other footsteps. Then, a discreet cough. Gideon ignored both of these.

What came next wasn't much of a surprise.

"That will be far enough, Mr. Gideon Upton," a voice bellowed out from behind him. "That is you, isn't it?"

Gideon stopped but didn't turn around. "Supposing it was," he said. "What then?"

"Why, then I would hope you'd come along peaceably," the voice answered. "You know better than to fight me in my own territory."

Gideon laughed and turned where he stood. "But you hardly go anywhere else lately," he explained. In his left hand he held the *Evening Sun*, rolled up. But from the fingers of his right hand now dangled a double page of the newspaper, hanging loosely in an upside down V. "Hello, Jack," Gideon said.

Jack was dressed in a military uniform, though there was hardly a square inch of cloth to be seen on him. His chubby form was covered, head to toe, hat to boots, with brass buttons, gold braid, and a host of bright ribbons and medals that made him look like a cross between a lost galaxy and a sterling silver tea service. "It's General Jack tonight," he said, and saluted Gideon with a drawn sword. His paraphernalia clinked and clattered pleasantly in accompaniment to his motions.

Gideon laughed again and returned the salute with his rolled up newspaper. "General Jack of the Park Patrol. I'm impressed. What is it that you want with me?"

"You're under arrest," said General Jack, visibly irritated. "I can't have you wandering all around the park like some vagrant, now, can I?"

"But I'm not wandering aimlessly," Gideon replied, gesturing with his arms, the darkness clinging to his coat and gathering behind him. "I've come to save the Lady Alice."

"Ha, then it's treason you're here for!"

"Well, I'd hardly call it that."

"There's but one penalty for treason," cried General Jack, raising his sword over his head. "Death!" he screamed, and charged towards Gideon.

Gideon had been waiting for that. He tossed the double page of newspaper into the air, and it beat its wings and screeched, raucously, its print-filled pinions cutting through the night in furious flight, its black eyes glistening, its beak sharp, its taloned feet strong and eager for pieces of the General's face.

They didn't quite collide.

The General stopped his headlong rush just in time, narrowly



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

avoiding the eagle's inky claws on its first attack. His sword was in position and he was ready as the bird made its second dive.

General Jack swung his sword and cursed, the eagle swooped and screamed and ripped, and the air was quickly filled with metal buttons and shreds of newsprint. While the buttons fell to the ground, the pieces of newsprint formed themselves into tiny eagles and joined the fight, which put the General at quite a disadvantage.

But he batted the eagle gnats aside with his free arm, and kept slicing at the big eagle until he succeeded in cutting it nearly in half, at which point it fluttered helplessly to the ground, squawking. Its tiny companions rushed to its aid.

Before they could join together and make themselves whole again, General Jack, dark blood oozing from scratches on his cheeks and forehead, quietly spoke a Word. The paper burst into bright orange flames, spewing bits of ash that drifted aimlessly up and down the sidewalk. He didn't take his eyes off the pile until the fire went out, and twin streams of blue smoke curled up into the chilly night air.

"Well," he said, to no one in particular, since Gideon was gone, "I can see I'm going to need some help with this one." He slid his sword back into its scabbard, hitched up his pants, dabbed at his face with a handkerchief, and began to pick up the buttons that had been torn from his uniform during the flight.

Gideon came trotting up to Bastille Fountain with two freshly-made newspaper panthers flanking him. They growled when he stopped and lashed their tails back and forth, standing guard. Overhead the flapping of newspaper wings could be heard. Gideon felt safe for the moment. He turned his attention to the fountain.

Bastille Fountain wasn't fancy, but it was big—the main pool was a good twenty feet across. In the center, cement figures representing the four seasons, their features blurred and rust-stained, held a second basin suspended in midair. A lazy four-foot waterjet burbled and splashed inside of that, spilling wet curtains over the basin edge and sending slick streams down the fingers that gripped its ornamental rim, drenching the arms, faces, and dresses of the seasons below.

Gideon leaned over the waters. "Alice!"

There was no answer, though strange ripples raced across the surface.

He called a second time, slightly louder: "Alice!"

Nothing.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gideon stood up straight. "Alice!" he yelled. "Damn you, woman, wake up!" He dug into his coat pocket, pulled out a thick handful of coins, and tossed them all at the raised pool. Some of them rang out briefly as they hit cement; others—the majority, actually—plopped as they fell into the water in both basins, a sound hardly distinguishable from the gurgle of the fountain.

But the pillar of water moved now, turning, weaving, not quite stumbling, raising her hands gracefully to cover her face, while her hair, with a life of its own, cascaded out and down her back in black, starlit ribbons. Her robe was a thing of sparkling white foam that tumbled into the waters of the inner pool; when she tried to gather up its skirts, she found them caught in the unyielding cement fingers of the seasons below.

"Gideon!" Her voice was clear and sweet, and her bright blue eyes stared at him in surprise and distress.

"Alice."

"Gideon, help! I can't get out!"

"I know, my dear. I'm here to save you." He took a sheet of newspaper, folded it lengthwise, and changed it into a set of parapeted stairs that telescoped across the main pool and came to rest on the edge of Lady Alice's basin.

General Jack finished pinning a scarlet cross for bravery above and beyond the call of duty during the Crimean War on the last of the hundred and forty two elm trees that lined the main walk. It had been a tedious task, making sure the correct button or medal was properly affixed to each trunk. The knowledge that Gideon was loose in the park and looking for the Lady Alice hadn't made things go any faster, either.

He took his hat off, tucked it under his arm, and walked slowly to the center of the walk. In spite of the cool night air, a thin film of sweat covered his bald, egg-shaped head, and yellow highlights from the streetlamps played across his features. He mopped at his face and the back of his neck with his handkerchief, then replaced his hat and drew his sword.

"Troops!" he screamed. "Attention!"

There were shadowy stirrings among the trees, and they untangled their branches over the walk, one from the other, destroying the leafy roof and letting the sky peep in overhead.

"Fall in!"

Now there was a rumbling and churning among the tree roots as knobby feet dug their way out of the ground, scattering black clods of dirt in every direction. The trees clambered onto the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sidewalk slowly, but without any hint of clumsiness; the main impressions they gave off were ones of strength and immense weight. Their buttons and medals glittered balefully in the night.

General Jack, his arms crossed over his chest, the unsheathed sword held upright in his right hand, waited patiently until they formed four straight rows on the sidewalk. "At ease, trees," he said. "Now listen up. There's an enemy in the park. Your mission tonight is to find him and keep him from doing any mischief. Take whatever measures you think necessary, but I want him alive—" and here the General paused, and ran his thumb across his sword blade to check its sharpness, "—so I can deal with him myself." He paused again, and then yelled out: "Do you understand that, trees?"

"Yes, sir!" the trees yelled back.

"I can't hear you!" screamed the General.

"Yes, sir!" the trees screamed back.

"I still can't hear you!" he shouted.

"YES, SIR!"

"All right! Now, who is your leader?"

"GENERAL JACK!"

"And who do you fight for?"

"GENERAL JACK!"

"And who do you die for?"

"GENERAL JACK!"

"And who do we fight?"

"THE ENEMY, SIR!"

"And what is his name?"

"GIDEON, SIR!"

"Let's hear it again!"

"GIDEON, SIR!"

"One more time!"

"GIDEON, SIR!"

"And what do we do to him—kill him?"

"NO!"

"Maim him?"

"YES!"

"Torture him, bruise him and scrape him?"

"YES!"

"Tie him up, stop him, detain him?"

"YES!"

"Forward!"

"MARCH!"

"Forward!"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"MARCH!"
"Forward!"
"MARCH!"
They shrumphed off into the distance.

"Oh Gideon!" said the Lady Alice, "Hurry, please! I can't bear it any longer!" She frantically tugged at the section of her glowing dress still pinned by a last cement hand; this only made Gideon stop working with his newspaper crowbar because the material got in the way.

"I'm not going to save you if you keep acting like this," he told her in an even tone, trying not to succumb to the tension he felt. General Jack should have shown up a good fifteen minutes ago, or at least run into one of the traps Gideon had set along the way. But he had done neither, and Gideon could feel tremors of his magic at work in the park.

Dismayed, Alice let fall the skirts she had gathered up in her arms, and they splashed in the fountain waters, nearly dousing Gideon. "I'm sorry," she said.

"It's all right." He went back to work on the fingers, muttering spells—or at least something that sounded like spells—and prying with the crowbar.

Alice knelt and hugged her knees, wanting to watch his work more closely. But she ended up studying Gideon's face: his delicate, fine-boned features; his lips, normally thin and now compressed into a determined line; the three blonde curls that had crept out from under his hat to become stuck in the sweat on his forehead; the way his green eyes glittered with spell-kindled fires.

She reached out and took his hat off. "I really am sorry," she said.

"I said it was all right," he snarled back, snatching his hat from her and putting it on again. He started pushing harder on the crowbar, trying to ignore her.

"Now you're angry with me," she said, taking his hat away again.

"No!" he roared, loosening two of the cement fingers but dropping the crowbar in the water at the same time, where it reverted to a sheet of wet newspaper. He grabbed at the hat, but Alice hid it behind her back.

"Tell me you're not angry with me," she said.

Gideon glared at her. "I'm not angry with you," he said between clenched teeth. "Now give me back my hat."

She kissed him instead.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her kiss was cool and sweet and fresh, and Gideon, after his initial surprise, drank deeply of it. In it, he could taste the bubbling cold of far-off mountain streams, hints of peppermint and clove and sassafras, the elusive flavor of honeysuckle rose, and the darker, heavier essences of wild blackberry and grape.

He had been furious with Alice at first, but then he quickly abandoned himself in her kiss. And once he did that, he felt the fear and worry drain out of him, leaving behind only confidence, composure, and a renewed strength.

It took him a second to realize the kiss had ended. When he did, he threw back his head and laughed loud and long, until the tears dripped out of his eyes.

The Lady Alice smiled when she saw Gideon had recovered his senses, and put his hat on her own head. "That's much more like it," she told him.

Gideon wiped the tears away with his coat sleeve. "Ah! You should have done that sooner, Alice!"

She grinned at him. His hat was far too large for her, and made her look like a thin pixie. "Everything has its moment, I suppose." Her blue eyes sparkled with amusement.

"I've missed you, Alice."

"And I you. Make me a promise."

"What?"

"When we get out of here—"

"You mean *if* we get out of here." He gingerly fished the piece of newspaper out of the water, turned it back into a soggy crowbar, and began wringing water from it.

"*When* we get out of here," she said firmly. She pushed the hat back on her forehead and rested her hands on her knees, her elbows jutting out at odd angles. "*When* we get out of here, let's go away together."

Gideon frowned. "Where?"

"Does it matter?"

"Well, it's just that we've *been* everywhere there is to go away to."

"Really?"

Gideon applied the crowbar to the remaining cement fingers, but it bent because it was still too wet. "Try thinking of a place we haven't been," he said forcing the crowbar back into its proper shape.

"Paris."

"We were there last fall."

"But I like Paris."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Everybody goes to Paris." He changed the crowbar into a bicycle pump. "Pick someplace else."

"How about Egypt?"

"It's flooding along the Nile now," he said, working the pump vigorously and sending a weak stream of water out the end of the hose and into the pool below. "The peasants are all busy being farmers, and we'd only get in the way."

"New Orleans?"

"Too late—we'll have missed the Mardi Gras this year, and that's the only time it's worth going."

"Tibet, then."

"Nope." He shook the pump, heard water sloshing inside it still, and examined the open end of the air tube. "We went there at the turn of the century. You hated it—it was either too hot or too cold. The only reason you don't remember is you caught Tibetian fever, and I had to haul you all the way to Ceylon before you recovered."

"Oh." She stood up.

"But don't let that stop you. Try some other places." Gideon changed the bicycle pump into a walking stick, unscrewed the cap, and poured more water out.

"Why don't you just make a new one?" she asked him, grumpily. "You've got enough fresh paper."

"Waste not, want not," he answered. "And I'm not sure I have enough to waste—we still have to make an exit once I get you loose." He looked up at her and smiled. "You're not giving up so quickly, are you?"

"No."

"Then let me help," he told her, screwing the top back on the cane and sticking it under his arm so he could count on his fingers. "Should I start with continents or bodies of water?"

"Oh, stop being so boring."

"All right. Continents then. That would be Africa, Asia, Australia—"

"I have it!"

"Australia?"

"No, no, not there." She knelt and took his hands in hers. "I've heard it said that the night is in uncharted ocean," she began.

Gideon looked at the sky doubtfully. "You're mad," he mumbled, shaking his head. "Stark, raving mad."

"But Gideon, just think of it—if the night is an ocean, then the moon must surely be a beautiful island," she said, standing up



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and beginning a dance of delight, whirling in slow circles, her arms outstretched, "and the stars like fishes—"

"Fishes?"

"Oh, yes, Gideon, and we'll bring the purple ones back with us to Avalon—" and here she became so tangled in her dress where the cement fingers held it that she stopped dancing and started tugging again. But even as she did so, a horrified look came over her face.

"All right, all right, I'll get it loose—"

"Gideon!"

"What?"

"Gideon, the trees are moving!"

Gideon looked over his shoulder, saw the burnt pavement and drifting ash that marked what was left of his sentinels, and then swore.

The southern half of the square around Bastille Fountain was quickly filling with cold, silent, walking elm trees. At the back of their ranks Gideon spotted a small, shining figure that could only have been General Jack; he threw his walking stick at the figure, and the stick swiftly whizzed through the air as if it had been shot from a bow, hitting the General with a satisfying thud and an accompanying oof.

Gideon leapt from the inner pool and hit the ground rolling so he could dodge the clutching branches of the nearest trees. He sprinted toward the open end of the square and, holding what remained of the *Evening Sun* perpendicular to the ground, wrapped newspaper castle walls around himself, walls that seemed to leap into the sky, reaching for the stars, towering over the turmoil.

It is unfortunate that Gideon wasn't inside when the transformation was complete.

It wasn't his fault, of course. It was the fault of one particularly surly elm tree, pinned with the scarlet cross for bravery above and beyond the call of duty during the Crimean War, a potent medal to be sure. This crafty, battlewise tree had entered the open square on the northern side, crept up behind Gideon unnoticed as he jumped from the fountain, and plucked him off his castle ramparts as they shot heavenward.

The other trees were quick to grasp the situation, and, since each tree wanted to be the one to turn the enemy over to General Jack, they all converged on Gideon and began a tug-of-war with him. General Jack, downed as he was by the flying cane, couldn't



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

get to the scene in time to take control of the situation, so what followed wasn't strictly his fault.

Different contingents of trees had ahold of different parts of Gideon—his arms, his legs, his head—and when the General came hobbling up, bellowing commands indiscriminately, they all gave one last tug, one final effort to lay victory at the feet of their beloved leader.

Gideon came apart in their hands.

He came apart in dusty reams, in chunks of faded yellow *Tribunes*, in heaps of brittle *Post-Dispatches*, in wads of *Manchester Guardians, Philadelphia Bulletins, Miami Heralds* and *New York Times*, most of them early morning editions. When this happened, Gideon's castle wavered and fell, snowing pages of the *Evening Sun* everywhere.

Silence set in, broken only by the sound of water splashing in Lady Alice's fountain.

The trees lined up in awkward, embarrassed rows, trying not to notice the sea of paper in which they were wading but looking very guilty all the same. General Jack just stood there, leaning on Gideon's cane. He stared at the trees, stared at the litter of papers, glanced briefly but contemptuously at the Lady Alice, and then stared at the paper some more. He poked at the mess with the cane and cleared his throat.

"Listen up, trees," he said. "There's nothing that can be done about this now." He stuck his chin out proudly and surveyed his troops. "But there is one big job we've got to finish before we can quit for the night."

The trees murmured excitedly among themselves. General Jack pulled a brass button off his uniform. "I want it all cleaned up," he told them, tossing the button to one side, where it exploded in a puff of smoke and left a green wire-meshed trash can. "Every scrap, every shred," and another button produced another can, "every page, every tiny piece, even if it's confetti-sized—I want it all." Two cans at once this time. "We can't afford to miss anything that would let our enemy escape." He tossed off a final three buttons with a flourish, and they thundered in a three-can grand finale. "Got it?"

The trees either mumbled or nodded their assent.

"Then get to it!" he screamed, and the trees immediately bent over to start picking up the paper, the majority of them bumping into one another in the process.

General Jack avoided the ensuing confusion by limping over to the fountain with Gideon's cane. "Good evening," he said, tip-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# GIVE YOUR FRIENDS THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS!

GIVE

**Isaac ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE**

**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!**

Now, for a stocking stuffer price, you can give friends the infinite wonders of the Universe. The very same wonders you're now enjoying in ***ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.***

Each gift recipient gets over 2,300 pages of outstanding science fiction—in thirteen unique, distinctive Christmas "packages." The first ***ASIMOV*** package goes under the tree—along with the gift announcement card we'll sign and send in your name. The others arrive regularly throughout 1984. Each is a reminder of your thoughtfulness, generosity and good taste. This kind of reminder is never too late!

**INEXPENSIVE....AND EASY TO GIVE, TOO!**

While once-a-year holiday rates are in effect, the first ***ASIMOV*** subscription costs only $15.97. Each additional gift is even less—just $12.97.

And you can complete your ***ASIMOV*** gift-giving in a matter of minutes. Just fill out the order card in this issue and we'll take care of all the details. If you prefer, call us with your order toll free: **1-800/247-2160, Operator #300. (In Iowa, call 1-800/362-2860.)** Then sit back and wait for the enthusiastic "thank-you's" that will soon be coming your way.

What won't soon be coming your way is our bill for your ***ASIMOV*** gift order. We'll hold off mailing that until after the holidays.

Even the postage on the order card is prepaid. We want to make this Christmas economical and effortless for you...merry and memorable for everyone on your gift list.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ping his hat to the Lady Alice. "I must say, you are looking quite beautiful tonight."

Alice ignored him, her arms folded across her chest.

"Look, Alice, I can understand your being upset about all this, but it was really for the best."

Still no answer.

"He was beneath you, Alice."

Alice stared down at the General, her eyes a chill, icy blue. "Really?" she said.

The General smiled. "Why, yes, of course. He never would have been good enough for you. He just couldn't cut it, I guess."

"And I suppose you are good enough for me."

"The best, Alice." He thumped his chest. "Solid brass."

"Well let me tell you something, Jack. I will kill you for what you've done to Gideon tonight."

"Oh?"

"Yes, oh. I will call my beasts from the pits of the ocean, have them hunt you down, and then cheerfully throttle you with my own hands."

The General chuckled, thinly, nasally, and conceitedly. "I think not, my dear," he said, twirling Gideon's cane in his fingers. "You will come around to my way of seeing things eventually. In fact," he added, debonairely thumping the cane on the pavement, "I was hoping this little episode tonight would make you realize how untenable your situation is." He leaned on the cane with both hands, his right leg jauntily crossed over his left, his foot balanced toe-first on the ground. "You are beginning to realize that, aren't you?"

A large wave rose suddenly from the bottom basin and doused the General. "I hope you rust," she told him.

"You know, Alice," the General said, dripping, "I am rapidly losing my patience with you."

"Not rapidly enough," Alice answered.

"Perhaps you are right." General Jack studied Gideon's cane thoughtfully for a moment. Suddenly, he tossed it into the air, making it spin with a flick of his wrist. Alice lunged for it desperately as it passed her, missing and falling to her knees.

The General caught the cane just before it fell into the bottom pool. "Missed!" he said, staring straight at her; he smiled, and without turning his gaze from her face, let the cane drop into the water, where it was transformed into a sheet of newspaper again.

The Lady Alice struggled to her feet.

"There is nothing left to change him back with now," the Gen-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eral told her. "You could have bargained for his life, you know. Nothing to say to that?" He smiled again. "Good. Very good. Perhaps you *are* beginning to realize the futility of your position."

He turned his back on her and rejoined his trees, although he still favored one leg slightly as he went. He spoke briefly to the elm with the scarlet cross, tossed a button toward the fountain, where it exploded into a waste can, and watched as the tree fished the newspaper out of the fountain waters.

The tree looked as if he might have said something to Alice, but evidently thought better of it when he saw the stern look on her face. He shrugged and continued to help with the cleanup.

The moon set, leaving the stars to fend for themselves.

After carefully collecting the last scraps of Gideon they could find, the elm troops had lined up all eight trash cans in a row and then marched off victoriously with General Jack in the lead.

The Lady Alice, of course, was neither fooled nor amused by this tactic. She had waited a good three hours, patiently watching the shadows in the foliage behind the trash cans, before the shadow that didn't belong stepped out into the square, its scarlet cross for bravery above and beyond the call of duty during the Crimean War glowing softly in the dark.

"Seen enough?" Alice asked.

The tree regarded her for a moment, apparently considering her question. Then he lumbered over to the trash cans, and mashed down the paper in each one securely. When he finished that, he looked back at Alice, grinned at her arrogantly, stretched his scrawny-leafed spring green limbs, and shuffled down the west walk to join his squadron.

As soon as he was out of sight, Alice knelt and whispered five words: "Now—bring him to me!"

The water at her feet and in the basin below boiled strangely, sending clouds of steam drifting in the night air. Crabs came scuttling out—hundreds of copper-colored fiddler crabs, none of them more than three inches across. They either flung themselves over the edge of the top pool, or crept quietly out of the bottom pool, moving across the fountain square with remarkable speed for their size.

Alice had made them out of the coins Gideon had tossed in her fountain, the first workable materials she'd had since the General had trapped her in the fountain. She watched, her heart pounding, as the first wave of crabs reached the trash cans and began climbing; clutched to her breast was Gideon's hat, warm and dry and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hidden by the folds of her gown. It was his last chance, the hat. The crabs were to bring enough newspaper over to the fountain for her to restore him with it.

The plan would have worked, too, except that the trash cans were enchanted.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the trash cans were singularly devoid of enchantment. As soon as the first crabs passed over the rim of a can, they would fall inside, pennies once again.

The crabs following what were now pennies were nobody's fools. As soon as they saw what had happened to their fellow crustaceans, they stopped in their tracks and began to warn the others in high-pitched rasping voices. In no time at all, confusion, accompanied by miniature squeals of consternation, spread through the ranks.

Crabs began leaping and falling off the trash cans into the masses below. Waves of crabs, still coming up from the rear, folded over waves of crabs that were milling and arguing with one another, until there were crabs five layers thick in some places. Little crab leaders stood on the tops of little shifting crab hills and screamed for attention over the rising tide of shrill babble.

The Lady Alice swore. "This isn't the time for a debate," she said. "Bring him to me!"

The crabs' response was immediate. They attacked two of the trash cans, trying to knock them over. Their actions were not very well coordinated, however: as often as one group of crabs would get a can rocking, another group, working at cross purposes to the first, would negate the momentum the first group had set up.

Alice endured this as long as she could. She watched the empty walks, half expecting to see dark shapes moving through the shadows toward her. "Hurry up!" she whispered, stamping her foot in frustration. "Get him over here now!"

A contingent of crabs—maybe a third of the entire group—broke away from the flurry of activity around the first two cans, and headed for a third can. The wishes of the Lady Alice were clear to them. If they couldn't get Gideon's papers to her, they would have to get a canful of Gideon to her.

The screech of metal on cement ripped through the quiet night, two, three, four times, every time the crabs moved the can forward. Alice wailed unhappily. Before, there had been a chance to quietly restore Gideon and escape without the General or any of his trees the wiser. Now, though—



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now the General and whatever else was awake in the park would be sure to come and investigate the strange noise. It was almost as if they had set off an alarm.

There was nothing else they could do now. Alice drew out Gideon's hat, half afraid it would revert to newspaper as soon as the night air hit it. The hat held, and she got ready to throw it.

The seconds drained away slowly, punctuated by the shrieking can. The crabs managed to get it more than halfway across the fountain square, still a good twenty feet away from Alice.

The first two cans were rocking violently.

That was when Alice heard footsteps to her left: giant, pavement-shuddering footsteps; smaller, quicker, pattering footsteps; and an accompanying military bellow that was very familiar to her.

She didn't even look to confirm what she knew; she threw the hat.

And everything began to happen very quickly.

Even as she threw Gideon's hat, the first set of cans tipped over like dominoes, one making the other fall, both of them sending papers scattering across a wider area than seemed possible, had they been normal papers.

General Jack and the elm with the crimson cross entered Bastille Square from the east. They both saw Gideon's hat wafting through the air on a slow, perfect arc; the General slowed down, pointed, and screamed a command, while the tree moved quickly to intercept the hat.

He missed. His twigs whipped through empty air as the hat landed in the trash can, sitting there for a second before the papers underneath it started quivering.

The elm got two steps closer.

A reconstituted Gideon shot out of the garbage can, past the arms of the surprised elm, and landed, rolling, in the litter of papers that the crabs had managed to spill out of the first two trash cans.

He sat there, dazed, for perhaps another second, then scrambled to his feet, raised his hands, and sang out his own Words of power in a melodious voice.

A sail arched up before him, fifty feet tall, triangular, paisley patterned, purple, gold and translucent, and billowing and snapping as it filled with a sudden wind. The varnished brown bows of a wooden ship surrounded Gideon, the crabs, and the now empty waste cans, carrying all of them forward and up, up, slowly and inexorably up.


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They knocked the elm tree over and sent him rolling, and still they climbed up, their rounded keel almost ten feet in the air, their timbers creaking as they gained speed and altitude.

General Jack chanted counter spells, making orange sparks swirl all around the ship. Gideon looked for a weapon; his magic was invested in the rising ship, and there was nothing left for fighting. Desperate, he took two steps aft, picked up an empty trash can, and heaved it over the side.

The General was caught completely by surprise. The trash can came falling over him, top down, and pinned him flat. There was an electric flash, and his torso reverted to aluminum beer cans; his arms and legs were splayed outside the can after it came to rest upside down, and his hatless head went slowly rolling away from the site of his body.

And that was that.

Gideon brought the golden bulk of the *Night Bird* to rest three feet away from the edge of the inner pool. The ship's single giant sail rippled serenely in the quieted wind; it cast faint shadows in starlight on the ground below.

He dropped an anchor into the bottom pool, placed a boarding plank between the boat and the edge of the fountain, picked out a particularly sturdy-looking stave, and walked over to Alice.

"Shall we?" he asked, holding his arm out for her after he had broken the final cement fingers of winter.

Alice smiled at him, kissed him on the cheek, took his arm, and said, "I believe we shall." They boarded the ship.

"Well," she said, seeing all the stacks of newspaper neatly bundled and stored on the deck, "I see you're provisioned for a long escape."

"Actually, I had hoped we could go away together."

"Really?"

"Of course. I wouldn't fib about something like that."

Alice giggled. "Where then?" she asked, stroking the *Night Bird*'s balustrade.

"I'm not sure," said Gideon. "But there are these rumors."

"Rumors?"

"Yes. I've heard it said that the night is an uncharted ocean."

"And that the moon must be like a beautiful island?"

"Yes."

"And the stars like fishes?"

"Yes, yes."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Lady Alice played with Gideon's lapels. "You can't believe everything you hear, you know."

"No. But it seems to me we ought to find out the truth of the matter for ourselves."

She hugged him. "I love you, Gideon."

"I love you too, Alice. Otherwise—"

"Help!" cried a voice from below. "Help! Help!"

Gideon and Alice furrowed their eyebrows at each other, slightly puzzled, then ran to the starboard bow to investigate.

It was General Jack's head that had cried out for help. It lay face up in the middle of a constellation of bright copper pennies, ten feet away from the reach of the fallen elm.

"You can't leave me here like this," pleaded the head.

Gideon laughed. "I do believe you're right," he said, and then jumped over the side. Once on the ground, he righted the trash can, threw in General Jack's arms and legs, and then walked over to the head.

"What are you going to do?" asked the head.

"What do you think I ought to do?" asked Gideon in return. "You were perfectly willing to finish me off."

The head didn't answer. Gideon frowned at it, and then looked up at the *Night Bird*. "Alice?"

There was silence for a space. "Let him go, Gideon," she said, softly. "I wish I could tell you to get rid of him. But let him go."

Gideon glared at Jack's head in his hand. "And I, for my part," he said, "wish she wasn't right." Tossing the head into the waiting arms of the elm tree, he then walked over to the trash can, dumped out the clattering beer cans and swept them into a neat pile with his feet. The trash can went into the fountain next, where it sizzled, popped, and turned into a brass button. "Goodbye, Jack," said Gideon, waving at the tree. "See you around sometime."

Jack didn't answer.

Alice lowered a rope for Gideon to climb back to the ship. They weighed anchor and disappeared quickly into the darkness.

"Well," said the head, after the *Night Bird* was gone, "let's not just sit here. Hurry up and toss me on my pile of cans. There's work that needs doing before the morning gets here."

The elm took aim as best it could, and Jack made it after only one bounce. He buried himself in cans quickly, huffing and puffing and rattling with exertion once he was out of sight. He finally came crawling out from under the far side of the pile, whole once more but changed. He was shorter, and his uniform, while still



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a tribute to the timelessness of brass and chrome and glitter, was of a decidedly different cut.

Jack seated himself on the ground, legs askew, his back against the cement rim of Bastille Fountain, took a deep breath and blew it out in relief. He picked up a stray beer can, negligently changed it into a handkerchief, and mopped his face, forehead and neck. Stuffing the handkerchief up his sleeve, he leaned back and looked around him.

The General's cap lay a couple of feet to his right. He stared at it a bit, grunted, leaned on his elbow and stretched over to it, barely able to reach it and draw it to him. He held the cap up in front of his face and studied it.

"The Army was a good life," he said, glancing at the elm tree and then back at the cap. "Pity it wasn't good enough." He tossed the cap, which went rolling across Bastille Square, coming to a stop when it bumped up against an overturned trash can.

Jack leaned to his left and dug into what remained of his pile of cans. "The Navy, though," he said, pulling a three-cornered Admiral's hat out of the pile, "offers many, many more possibilities." He frowned at the hat a moment. "We'll have to raid a junkyard or two," he said, grabbing a can and changing it into a brilliant purple feather, "until we have enough supplies on hand." He stuck the plume on the Admiral's hat, then fitted the hat on his head. "You can never really have enough raw materials."

He struggled to his feet, straightened his jacket, stood up as tall as he could, and then blew the feather out of his face. "But first," he said, turning a critical eye to the elm tree with the crimson cross for bravery above and beyond the call of duty during the Crimean War, "there remains the matter of a proper ship."

Old Willie loved to walk through the park at dawn, before he opened his newsstand for the day.

There was something eerie and beautiful and utterly private about the park when the sun first came up, particularly during the spring. Maybe it was the way the long, golden sunbeams gilded the dew that had collected in all sorts of unlikely places overnight. Or perhaps it was the songs the newly-arrived birds sang, or the fresh smells and colors from different just-opened blossoms and leaves that had been nonexistent the day before. Whatever the circumstances, Willie felt like the park was full of quiet miracles made just for him when he walked through every morning.

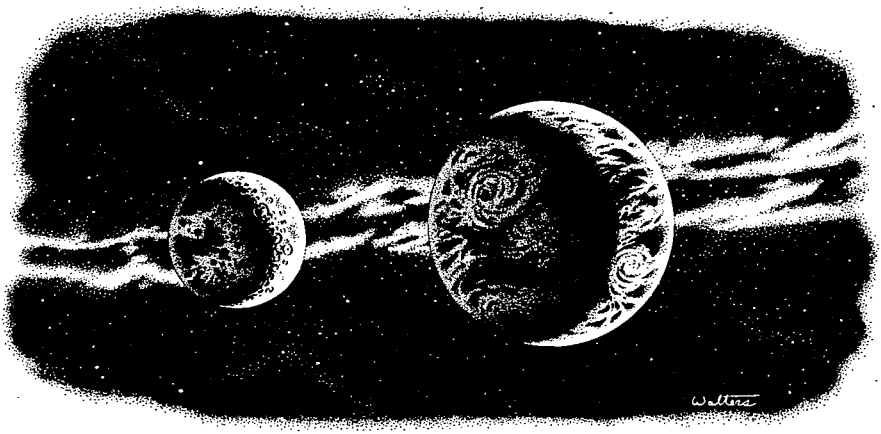


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Today, though, he saw nothing but ruin when he came through Bastille Square—broken branches, scattered change, and beer cans everywhere. It made the play of water in Bastille Fountain seem harsh and out of place, like it was the wonder that didn't belong, rather than the mess. Well, he thought, there was no help for it. The park patrol would find the vandals eventually, and there was nothing to do but wait until that happened.

Just as he was about to leave the fountain square, he spotted an odd glimmering near a cluster of trash cans on the other side. Investigating, he found an old military hat buried in a pile of yesterday's papers; the hat was covered with pins and medals and badges, most of which Willie had never seen the likes of before. "Well, now," he said, polishing the hat with his coat sleeve and then trying it on, "ain't that something." It wasn't a perfect fit, but it was close enough. He decided to keep the hat.

He whistled a cheerful tune all the rest of the way to his newsstand. ●



**GIVE TO THE**
**UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND.**
A mind is a terrible thing to waste.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(From page 67)

# READERS' SOLUTIONS TO THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

Last July I said I would be pleased to get the results of any computer program that gave all solutions for the problem of adding plus and minus signs to the sequences 123456789 and 987654321 so as to make a sum of 666 (the number of the Beast) or 777 (a traditional symbol of perfection). R. H. Lyddane, of Schenectady, NY, was the first to respond, followed by Michael Buchanan, of Columbia, SC, and others too numerous to list.

666 has eight solutions for the ascending sequence:

$$-1+2-3+4-5+678-9$$
$$+1-2-3-4+5+678-9$$
$$+1+2+3-4-5+678-9$$
$$+1-23-4+5+678+9$$
$$+1+2+3+4+567+89$$
$$+1+23-45+678+9$$
$$+123+456+78+9$$
$$+1234-567+8-9$$

And five solutions for the descending:

$$-9+8+7+654+3+2+1$$
$$+9-8+7+654+3+2-1$$
$$+9+8-7+654+3-2+1$$
$$+9-8-7+654-3+21$$
$$+9+87+6+543+21$$

777 has two solutions for the ascending sequence:

$$-12-3+4+5-6+789$$
$$-12+3-4-5+6+789$$

And two for the descending:

$$-9-8+765-4+32+1$$
$$+98+7+654-3+21$$



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNKNOWN
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# HER FURRY FACE

by Leigh Kennedy

art: John Pierard

Much has been said about "man's inhumanity to man." But the boundary between "man" and "animal" is becoming ever narrower. What will we say when it finally disappears? Leigh Kennedy's most recent appearance in these pages was with "Greek" in the October 1983 issue.

Douglas was embarrassed when he saw Annie and Vernon mating.

He'd seen hours of sex between orangutans, but this time was different. He'd never seen *Annie* doing it. He stood in the shade of the pecan tree for a moment, shocked, iced tea glasses sweating in his hand, then he backed around the corner of the brick building. He was confused. The cicadas seemed louder than usual, the sun hotter, and the squeals of pleasure from the apes strange.

He walked back to the front porch and sat down. His mind still

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw the two giant mounds of red-orange fur moving together like one being.

When the two orangs came back around, Douglas thought he saw smugness in Vernon's face. Why not, he thought? I guess I would be smug, too.

Annie flopped down on the grassy front yard and crossed one leg over the other, her abdomen bulging high; she gazed upward into the heavy white sky.

Vernon bounded toward Douglas. He was young and red-chocolate colored. His face was still slim, without the older orangutan jowls yet.

"Be polite," Douglas warned him.

"Drink tea, please?" Vernon signed rapidly, the fringe on his elbows waving. "Dry as bone."

Douglas handed Vernon one of the glasses of tea, though he'd brought it out for Annie. The handsome nine-year-old downed it in a gulp. "Thank you," he signed. He touched the edge of the porch and withdrew his long fingers. "Could fry egg," he signed, and instead of sitting, swung out hand-over-hand on the ropes between the roof of the schoolhouse and the trees. It was a sparse and dry substitute for the orang's native rain forest.

He's too young and crude for Annie, Douglas thought.

"Annie," Douglas called. "Your tea."

Annie rolled onto one side and lay propped on an elbow, staring at him. She was lovely. Fifteen years old, her fur was glossy and coppery, her small yellow eyes in the fleshy face expressive and intelligent. She started to raise up toward him, but turned toward the road.

The mail jeep was coming down the highway.

In a blurred movement, she set off at a four-point gallop down the half-mile drive toward the mailbox. Vernon swung down from his tree and followed, making a small groan.

Reluctant to go out in the sun, Douglas put down the tea and followed the apes down the drive. By the time he got near them, Annie was sitting with mail sorted between her toes, holding an opened letter in her hands. She looked up with an expression on her face that he'd never seen—it could have been fear, but it wasn't.

She handed the letter to Vernon, who pestered her for it. "Douglas," she signed, "they want to buy my story."

Therese lay in the bathwater, her knees sticking up high, her hair floating beside her face. Douglas sat on the edge of the tub;



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as he talked to her he was conscious that he spoke a double language—the one with his lips and the other with his hands.

"As soon as I called Ms. Young, the magazine editor, and told her who Annie was, she got really excited. She asked me why we didn't send a letter explaining it with the story, so I told her that Annie didn't want anyone to know first."

"Did Annie decide that?" Therese sounded skeptical, as she always seemed to when Douglas talked about Annie.

"We talked about it and she wanted it that way." Douglas felt that resistance from Therese. Why she never understood, he didn't know, unless she did it to provoke him. She acted as though she thought an ape was still just an ape, no matter what he or she could do. "Anyway," he said, "she talked about doing a whole publicity thing to the hilt—talk shows, autograph parties. You know. But Dr. Morris thinks it would be better to keep things quiet."

"Why?" Therese sat up; her legs went underwater and she soaped her arms.

"Because she'd be too nervous. Annie, I mean. It might disrupt her education to become a celebrity. Too bad. Even Dr. Morris knows that it would be great for fund-raising. But I guess we'll let the press in some."

Therese began to shampoo her hair. "I brought home that essay that Sandy wrote yesterday. The one I told you about. If she were an orangutan instead of just a deaf kid, she could probably get it published in *Fortune*." Therese smiled.

Douglas stood. He didn't like the way Therese headed for the old argument—no matter what one of Therese's deaf students did, if Annie could do it one-one-hundredth as well, it was more spectacular. Douglas knew it was true, but why Therese was so bitter about it, he didn't understand.

"That's great," he said, trying to sound enthusiastic.

"Will you wash my back?" she asked.

He crouched and absently washed her. "I'll never forget Annie's face when she read that letter."

"Thank you," Therese said. She rinsed. "Do you have any plans for this evening?"

"I've got work to do," he said, leaving the bathroom. "Would you like me to work in the bedroom so you can watch television?"

After a long pause, she said, "No, I'll read."

He hesitated in the doorway. "Why don't you go to sleep early? You look tired."

She shrugged. "Maybe I am."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

* * *

In the playroom at the school, Douglas watched Annie closely. It was still morning, though late. In the recliner across the room from him, she seemed a little sleepy. Staring out the window, blinking, she marked her place in Pinkwater's *Fat Men From Space* with a long brown finger.

He had been thinking about Therese, who'd been silent and morose that morning. Annie was never morose, though often quiet. He wondered if Annie was quiet today because she sensed that Douglas was not happy. When he'd come to work, she'd given him an extra hug.

He wondered if Annie could have a crush on him, like many schoolgirls have on their teachers. Remembering her mating with Vernon days before, he idly wandered into a fantasy of touching her and gently, gently moving inside her.

The physical reaction to his fantasy embarrassed him. *God, what am I thinking?* He shook himself out of the reverie, averting his gaze for a few moments, until he'd gotten control of himself again.

"Douglas," Annie signed. She walked erect, towering, to him and sat down on the floor at his feet. Her flesh folded onto her lap like dough.

"What?" he asked, wondering suddenly if orangutans were telepathic.

"Why you say my story children's?"

He looked blankly at her.

"Why not send *Harper's?*" she asked, having to spell out the name of the magazine.

He repressed a laugh, knowing it would upset her. "It's . . . it's the kind of story children would like."

"Why?"

He sighed. "The level of writing is . . . *young*. Like you, sweetie." He stroked her head, looking into the small intense eyes. "You'll get more sophisticated as you grow."

"I smart as you," she signed. "You understand me always because I talk smart.

Douglas was dumbfounded by her logic.

She tilted her head and waited. When Douglas shrugged, she seemed to assume victory and returned to her recliner.

Dr. Morris came in. "Here we go," she said, handing him the paper and leaving again.

Douglas skimmed the page until he came to an article about the "ape author." He scanned it. It contained one of her flash-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

points; this and the fact that she was irritable from being in estrus, made him consider hiding it. But that wouldn't be right.

"Annie," he said softly.

She looked up.

"There's an article about you."

"Me read," she signed, putting her book on the floor. She came and crawled up on the sofa next to him. He watched her eyes as they jerked across every word. He grew edgy. She read on.

Suddenly she took off as if from a diving board. He ran after her as she bolted out the door. The stuffed dog which had always been a favorite toy was being shredded in those powerful hands even before he knew she had it. Annie screamed as she pulled the toy apart, running into the yard.

Terrified by her own aggression, she ran up the tree with stuffing falling like snow behind her.

Douglas watched as the shade filled with foam rubber and fake fur. The tree branches trembled. After a long while, she stopped pummeling the tree and sat quietly.

She spoke to herself with her long ape hand. "Not animal," she said, "not animal."

Douglas suddenly realized that Therese was afraid of the apes.

She watched Annie warily as the four of them strolled along the edge of the school acreage. Douglas knew that Therese didn't appreciate the grace of Annie's muscular gait as he did; the sign language that passed between them was as similar to the Amslan that Therese used for her deaf children as British to Jamaican. Therese couldn't appreciate Annie in creative conversation.

It wasn't good to be afraid of the apes, no matter how educated they were.

He had invited her out, hoping it would please her to be included in his world here. She had only visited briefly twice before.

Vernon lagged behind them, snapping pictures now and then with the expensive but hardy camera modified for his hands. Vernon took several pictures of Annie and one of Douglas, but only when Therese had separated from him to peer between the rushes at the edge of the creek.

"Annie," Douglas called, pointing ahead. "A cardinal. The red bird."

Annie lumbered forward. She glanced back to see where Douglas pointed, then stood still, squatting. Douglas walked beside her and they watched the bird.

It flew.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# GIVE YOUR FRIENDS THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS!

GIVE

**Isaac ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE**

**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!**

Now, for a stocking stuffer price, you can give friends the infinite wonders of the Universe. The very same wonders you're now enjoying in **ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.**

Each gift recipient gets over 2,300 pages of outstanding science fiction—in thirteen unique, distinctive Christmas "packages." The first **ASIMOV** package goes under the tree—along with the gift announcement card we'll sign and send in your name. The others arrive regularly throughout 1984. Each is a reminder of your thoughtfulness, generosity and good taste. This kind of reminder is never too late!

**INEXPENSIVE....AND EASY TO GIVE, TOO!**

While once-a-year holiday rates are in effect, the first **ASIMOV** subscription costs only $15.97. Each additional gift is even less—just $12.97.

And you can complete your **ASIMOV** gift-giving in a matter of minutes. Just fill out the order card in this issue and we'll take care of all the details. If you prefer, call us with your order toll free: **1-800/247-2160, Operator #300. (In Iowa, call 1-800/362-2860.)** Then sit back and wait for the enthusiastic "thank-you's" that will soon be coming your way.

What won't soon be coming your way is our bill for your **ASIMOV** gift order. We'll hold off mailing that until after the holidays.

Even the postage on the order card is prepaid. We want to make this Christmas economical and effortless for you...merry and memorable for everyone on your gift list.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gone," Annie signed.

"Wasn't it pretty, though?" Douglas asked.

They ambled on. Annie stopped often to investigate shiny bits of trash or large bugs. They didn't come this far from the school much. Vernon whizzed past them, a dark auburn streak of youthful energy.

Remembering Therese, Douglas turned. She sat on a stump far behind. He was annoyed. He'd told her to wear her jeans and a straw hat because there would be grass burrs and hot sun. But there she sat, bareheaded, wearing shorts, miserably rubbing at her ankles.

He grunted impatiently. Annie looked up at him. "Not you," he said, stroking her fur. She patted his butt.

"Go on," Douglas said, turning back. When he came to Therese, he said, "What's the problem?"

"No problem." She stood, and started forward without looking at him. "I was just resting."

Annie had paused to poke at something on the ground with a stick. Douglas quickened his step. Even though his students were smart, they had orangutan appetites. He always worried that they would eat something that would sicken them. "What is it?" he called.

"Dead cat," Vernon signed back. He took a picture as Annie flipped the carcass with her stick.

Therese hurried forward. "Oh, poor kitty . . ." she said, kneeling.

Annie had seemed too absorbed in poking the cat to notice Therese approach; only a quick eye could follow her leap. Douglas was stunned.

Both screamed. It was over.

Annie clung to Douglas's legs, whimpering.

"Shit!" Therese said. She lay on the ground, rolling from side to side, holding her left arm. Blood dripped from between her fingers.

Douglas pushed Annie back. "That was bad, *very bad*," he said. "Do you hear me?"

Annie sank down on her rump and covered her head. She hadn't gotten a child-scolding for a long time. Vernon stood beside her, shaking his head, signing, "Not wise, baboon-face."

"Stand up," Douglas said to Therese. "I can't help you right now."

Therese was pale, but dry-eyed. Clumsily, she stood and grew



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even paler. A hunk of flesh hung loosely from above her elbow, meaty and bleeding. "Look."

"Go on. Walk back to the house. We'll come right behind you." He tried to keep his voice calm, holding a warning hand on Annie's shoulder.

Therese moaned, catching her breath. "It hurts," she said, but stumbled on.

"We're coming," Douglas said sternly. "Just walk and—Annie, don't you dare step out of line."

They walked silently, Therese ahead, leaving drops of blood in the dirt. The drops got larger and closer together. Once, Annie dipped her finger into a bloody spot and sniffed her fingertip.

Why can't things just be easy and peaceful, he wondered. Something always happens. *Always*. He should have known better than to bring Therese around Annie. Apes didn't understand that vulnerable quality that Therese was made of. He himself didn't understand it, though at one time he'd probably been attracted to it. No—maybe he'd never really seen it until it was too late. He'd only thought of Therese as "sweet" until their lives were too tangled up to keep clear of it.

Why couldn't she be as tough as Annie? Why did she always take everything so seriously?

They reached the building. Douglas sent Annie and Vernon to their rooms and guided Therese to the infirmary. He watched as Jim, their all-purpose nurse and veterinary assistant, examined her arm. "I think you should probably have stitches."

He left the room to make arrangements.

Therese looked at Douglas, holding the gauze over her still-bleeding arm. "Why did she bite me?" she asked.

Douglas didn't answer. He couldn't think of how to say it.

"Do you have any idea?" she asked.

"You asked for it, all your wimping around."

"*I* . . ."

Douglas saw the anger rising in her. He didn't want to argue now. He wished he'd never brought her. He'd done it for her, and she ruined it. All ruined.

"Don't start," he said simply, giving her a warning look.

"But, Douglas, I didn't do anything."

"Don't start," he repeated.

"I see now," she said coldly. "Somehow it's my fault again."

Jim returned with his supplies.

"Do you want me to stay?" Douglas asked. He suddenly felt a



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pang of guilt, realizing that she was actually hurt enough for all this attention.

"No," she said softly.

And her eyes looked far, far from him as he left her.

On the same day that the largest donation ever came to the school, a television news team came out to tape.

Douglas could tell that everyone was excited. Even the chimps that lived on the north half of the school hung on the fence and watched the TV van being unloaded. The reporter decided upon the playroom as the best location for the taping, though she didn't seem to relish sitting on the floor with the giant apes. People went over scripts, strung cords, microphones, set up hot lights, and discussed angles and sound while pointing at the high ceiling's jungle-gym design. All this to talk to a few people and an orangutan.

They brought Annie's desk into the playroom, contrary to Annie's wishes. Douglas explained that it was temporary, that these people would go away after they talked a little. Douglas and Annie stayed outside as long as possible and played Tarzan around the big tree. He tickled her. She grabbed him as he swung from a limb. "Kagoda?" she signed, squeezing him with one arm.

"Kagoda!" he shouted, laughing.

They relaxed on the grass. Douglas was hot. He felt flushed all over. "Douglas," Annie signed, "they read story?"

"Not yet. It isn't published yet."

"Why come talk?" she asked.

"Because you wrote it and sold it and people like to interview famous authors." He groomed her shoulder. "Time to go in," he said, seeing a wave from inside.

Annie picked him up in a big hug and carried him in.

"Here it is!" Douglas called to Therese, and turned on the video-recorder.

First, a long shot of the school from the dusty drive, looking only functional and square, without personality. The reporter's voice said, "Here, just southeast of town, is a special school with unusual young students. The students here have little prospect for employment when they graduate, but millions of dollars each year fund this institution."

A shot of Annie at her typewriter, picking at the keyboard with her long fingers; a sheet of paper is slowly covered with large block letters.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is Annie, a fifteen-year-old orangutan, who has been a student with the school for five years. She graduated with honors from another "ape school" in Georgia before coming here. And now Annie has become a writer. Recently, she sold a story to a children's magazine. The editor who bought the story didn't know that Annie was an orangutan until after she had selected the story for publication."

Annie looked at the camera uncertainly.

"Annie can read and write, and understand spoken English, but she cannot speak. She uses a sign language similar to the one hearing-impaired use." Change in tone from narrative to interrogative. "Annie, how did you start writing?"

Douglas watched himself on the small screen watching Annie sign, "Teacher told me write." He saw himself grin, eyes shift slightly toward the camera, but generally watching Annie. His name and "Orangutan Teacher" appeared on the screen. The scene made him uneasy.

"What made you send in Annie's story for publication?" the reporter asked.

Douglas signed to Annie, she came to him for a hug, and turned a winsome face to the camera. "Our administrator, Dr. Morris, and I both read it. I commented that I thought it was as good as any kid's story, so Dr. Morris said, 'Send it in.' The editor liked it." Annie made a "pee" sign to Douglas.

Then, a shot of Dr. Morris in her office, a chimp on her lap, clapping her brown hands.

"Dr. Morris, your school was established five years ago by grants and government funding. What is your purpose here?"

"Well, in the last few decades, apes—mostly chimpanzees like Rose here—have been taught sign language experimentally. Mainly to prove that apes could indeed use language." Rosie put the tip of her finger through the gold hoop in Dr. Morris's ear. Dr. Morris took her hand away gently. "We were established with the idea of *educating* apes, a comparable education to the primary grades." She looked at the chimp. "Or however far they will advance."

"Your school has two orangutans and six chimpanzees. Are there differences in their learning?" the reporter asked.

Dr. Morris nodded emphatically. "Chimpanzees are very clever, but the orang has a different brain structure which allows for more abstract reasoning. Chimps learn many things quickly, orangs are slower. But the orangutan has the ability to learn in greater depth."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shot of Vernon swinging in the ropes in front of the school.

Assuming that Vernon is Annie, the reporter said, "Her teacher felt from the start that Annie was an especially promising student. The basic sentences that she types out on her typewriter are simple but original entertainment."

Another shot of Annie at the typewriter.

"If you think this is just monkey business, you'd better think again. Tolstoy, watch out!"

Depressed by the lightness, brevity, and the stupid "monkey-business" remark, Douglas turned off the television.

He sat for a long time. Whenever Therese had gone to bed, she had left him silently. After a half an hour of staring at the blank screen, he rewound his video recorder and ran it soundlessly until Annie's face appeared.

And then froze it. He could almost feel again the softness of her halo of red hair against his chin.

He couldn't sleep.

Therese had rumpled her way out of the sheet and lay on her side, her back to him. He looked at the shape of her shoulder and back, downward to the dip of the waist, up the curve of her hip. Her buttocks were round ovals, one atop the other. Her skin was sleek and shiny in the filtered streetlight coming through the window. She smelled slightly of shampoo and even more slightly of female.

What he felt for her anyone would call "love," when he thought of her generally. And yet, he found himself helplessly angry with her most of the time. When he thought he could amuse her, it would end with her feelings being hurt for some obscure reason. He heard cruel words come barging out of an otherwise gentle mouth. She took everything seriously; mishaps and misunderstandings occurred beyond his control, beyond his repair.

Under this satiny skin, she was troubled and tense. A lot of sensitivity and fear. He had stopped trying to gain access to what had been the happier parts of her person, not understanding where they had gone. He had stopped wanting to love her, but he didn't *not* want to love her, either. It just didn't seem to matter.

Sometimes, he thought, it would be easier to have someone like Annie for a wife.

Annie.

He loved her furry face. He loved the unconditional joy in her face when she saw him. It was always there. She was bright and warm and unafraid. She didn't read things into what he said, but



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

listened and talked with him. They were so natural together. Annie was so filled with vitality.

Douglas withdrew his hand from Therese, whose skin seemed a bare blister of dissatisfaction.

He lay on the floor of the apes' playroom with the fan blowing across his chest. He held Annie's report on Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* by diagonal corners to keep it from flapping.

Annie lazily swung from bars criss-crossing the ceiling.

"Paul wasn't happy at work because the boss looked over his shoulder at his handwriting," she had written. "But he was happy again later. His brother died and his mother was sad. Paul got sick. He was better and visited his friends again. His mother died and his friends didn't tickle him anymore."

Douglas looked over the top of the paper at Annie. True, it was the first time she'd read an "adult" novel, but he'd expected something better than this. He considered asking her if Vernon had written the report for her, but thought better of it.

"Annie," he said, sitting up. "What do you think this book is really about?"

She swung down and landed on the sofa. "About man," she said.

Douglas waited. There was no more. "But what about it? Why this man instead of another? What was special about him?"

Annie rubbed her hands together, answerless.

"What about his mother?"

"She help him," Annie answered in a flurry of dark fingers. "Especially when he paint."

Douglas frowned. He looked at the page again, disappointed.

"What I do?" Annie asked, worried.

He tried to brighten up. "You did just fine. It was a hard book."

"Annie smart," the orang signed. "Annie smart."

Douglas nodded. "I know."

Annie rose, then stood on her legs, looking like a two-story fuzzy building, teetering from side to side. "Annie smart. Writer. Smart," she signed. "Write book. Bestseller."

Douglas made a mistake. He laughed. Not as simple as a human laughing at another, this was an act of aggression. His bared teeth and uncontrolled guff-guff struck out at Annie. He tried to stop.

She made a gulping sound and galloped out of the room.

"Wait, Annie!" He chased after her.

By the time he got outside she was far ahead. He stopped run-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ning when his chest hurt and trotted slowly through the weeds toward her. She sat forlornly far away and watched him come.

When he was near, she signed, "hug," three times.

Douglas collapsed, panting, his throat raw. "Annie, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean it." He put his arms around her.

She held onto him.

"I love you, Annie. I love you so much I don't want ever to hurt you. Ever, ever, ever. I want to be with you all the time. Yes, you're smart and talented and good." He kissed her tough face.

Whether forgotten or forgiven, the hurt of his laughter was gone from her eyes. She held him tighter, making a soft sound in her throat, a sound for him.

They lay together in the crackling yellow weeds, clinging. Douglas felt his love physically growing for her. More passionately than ever before in his life, he wanted to make love to her. He touched her. He felt that she understood what she wanted, that her breath on his neck was anticipation. A consummation as he'd never imagined, the joining of their species in language and body. Not dumb animal-banging but mutual love... He climbed over her and hugged her back.

Annie went rigid when he entered her.

Slowly, she rolled away from him, but he held onto her. "No." A horrible grimace came across her face that raised the hairs on the back of Douglas's neck. "Not you," she said.

*She's going to kill me*, he thought.

His passion declined; Annie disentangled herself and walked away.

He sat for a moment, stunned at what he'd done, stunned at what had happened, wondering what he would do the rest of his life with the memory of it. Then he zipped up his pants.

Staring at his dinner plate, he thought, it's just the same as if I had been rejected by a woman. I'm not the kind that goes for bestiality. I'm not some farm boy who can't find someplace to put it.

His hands could still remember the matted feel of her fur; tucked in his groin was the memory of being in an alien place. It had made him throw up out in the field that afternoon, and after that he'd come straight home. He hadn't even said goodnight to the orangs.

"What's the matter?" Therese asked.

He shrugged.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She half-rose out of her chair to kiss him on the temple. "You don't have a fever, do you?"

"No."

"Can I do something to make you feel better?" Her hand slid along his thigh.

He stood up. "Stop it."

She sat still. "Are you in love with another woman?"

Why can't she just leave me alone? "No. I have a lot on my mind. There's a lot going on."

"It never was like this, even when you were working on your thesis."

"Therese," he said, with what he felt was undeserved patience, "just leave me alone. It doesn't help with you at me all the time."

"But I'm scared, I don't know what to do. You act like you don't want me around."

"All you do is criticize me." He stood and took his dishes to the sink.

Slowly, she trailed after him, carrying her plate. "I'm just trying to understand. It's my life, too."

He said nothing and she walked away as if someone had told her not to leave footsteps.

In the bathroom, he stripped and stood under the shower a long time. He imagined that Annie's smell clung to him. He felt that Therese could smell it on him.

What have I done, what have I done . . .

And when he came out of the shower, Therese was gone.

He had considered calling in sick, but he knew that it would be just as miserable to stay around the house and think about Annie, think about Therese, and worse, to think about himself.

He dressed for work, but couldn't eat breakfast. Realizing that his pain showed, he straightened his shoulders, but found them drooping again as he got out of the car at work.

With some fear, he came through the office. The secretary greeted him with rolled eyes. "Someone's given out our number again," she said as the phone buzzed. Another line was on hold. "This morning there was a man standing at the window watching me until Gramps kicked him off the property."

Douglas shook his head in sympathy with her and approached the orang's door. He felt nauseated again.

Vernon sat at the typewriter, most likely composing captions for his photo album. He didn't get up to greet Douglas, but gave him an evaluative stare.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Douglas patted his shoulder. "Working?" he asked.

"Like dog," Vernon said, and resumed typing.

Annie sat outside on the back porch. Douglas opened the door and stood beside her. She looked up at him, but—like Vernon—made no move toward the customary hug. The morning was still cool, the shadow of the building still long in front of them. Douglas sat down.

"Annie," he said softly. "I'm sorry. I'll never do it again. You see, I felt . . ." He stopped. It wasn't any easier than it had been to talk to Oona, or Wendy, or Shelley, or Therese. . . . He realized that he didn't understand her any more than he'd understood them. Why had she rejected him? What was she thinking? What would happen from now on? Would they be friends again?

"Oh, hell," he said. He stood. "It won't happen again."

Annie gazed away into the trees.

He felt strained all over, especially in his throat. He stood by her for a long time.

"I don't want write stories," she signed.

Douglas stared at her. "Why?"

"Don't want." She seemed to shrug.

Douglas wondered what had happened to the confident ape who'd planned to write a bestseller the day before. "Is that because of me?"

She didn't answer.

"I don't understand," he said. "Do you want to write it down for me? Could you explain it that way?"

"No," she signed, "can't explain. Don't want."

He signed. "What *do* you want?"

"Sit tree. Eat bananas, chocolate. Drink brandy." She looked at him seriously. "Sit tree. Day, day, day, week, month, year."

Christ almighty, he thought, she's having a goddamned existential crisis. All the years of education. All the accomplishments. All the hopes of an entire field of primatology. All shot to hell because of a moody ape. It can't just be me. This would have happened sooner or later, but maybe . . . He thought of all the effort he would have to make to repair their relationship. It made him tired.

"Annie, why don't we just ease up a little on your work. You can rest. Today. You can go sit in the tree all of today and I'll bring you a glass of wine."

She shrugged again.

Oh, I've botched it, he thought. What an idiot. He felt a pain coming back, a pain like poison, without a focal point but shooting



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through his heart and hands, making him dizzy and short of breath.

At least she doesn't hate me, he thought, squatting to touch her hand.

She bared her teeth.

Douglas froze. She slid away from him and headed for the trees.

He sat alone at home and watched the newscast. In a small midwestern town they burned the issues of the magazine with Annie's story in it.

A heavy woman in a windbreaker was interviewed with the bonfire in the background. "I don't want my children reading things that weren't even written by humans. I have human children and this godless ape is not going to tell its stories to them."

A quick interview with Dr. Morris, who looked even more tired and introverted than usual. "The story is a very innocent tale, told by an innocent personality. Annie is not a beast. I really don't think she has any ability for, or intention of, corruption . . ."

He turned the television off. He picked up the phone and dialed one of Therese's friends. "Jan, have you heard from Therese yet?"

"No, sure haven't."

"Well, let me know, okay?"

"Sure."

He thought vaguely about trying to catch her at work, but he left earlier in the morning and came home later in the evening than she did.

Looking at her picture on the wall, he thought of when they had first met, first lived together. There had been a time when he'd loved her so much he'd been bursting with it. Now he felt empty, but curious about where she was. He didn't want her to hate him, but he still didn't know if he could talk to her about what had happened. The idea that she would sit and listen to him didn't seem realistic.

Even Annie wouldn't listen to him anymore.

He was alone. He'd done a big, dumb, terrible thing and wished he hadn't. It would have been different if Annie had reciprocated, if somehow they could have become lovers. Then it would have been them against the world, a new kind of relationship. The first intelligent interspecial love affair . . .

But Annie didn't seem any different than Therese, after all. Annie was no child. She'd given him all those signals, flirting, then not carrying though. Acting like he'd raped her or something. She didn't really have any more interest in him than Dr. Morris



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would in Vernon. I couldn't have misunderstood, could I? he wondered.

He was alone. And without Annie's consent, he was just a jerk who'd screwed an ape.

"I made a mistake," he said aloud to Therese's picture. "So let's forget it."

But even he couldn't forget.

"Dr. Morris wants to see you," the secretary said as he came in.

"Okay." He changed course for the administrative office. He whistled. In the past few days, Annie had been cool, but he felt that everything would settle down eventually. He felt better. Wondering what horrors or marvels Dr. Morris had to share with him, he knocked at her door and peered through the glass window. Probably another magazine burning, he thought.

She signaled him to come in. "Hello, Douglas."

*Annie*, he thought, *something's happened.*

He stood until she motioned him to sit down. She looked at his face several seconds. "This is difficult for me," she said.

She's discovered me, he thought. But he put that aside, figuring it was a paranoia that made him worry. There's no way. No way. I have to calm down or I'll show it.

She held up a photograph.

There it was—a dispassionate and cold document of that one moment in his life. She held it up to him like an accusation. It shocked him as if it hadn't been himself.

Defiance forced him to stare at the picture instead of looking for compassion in Dr. Morris's eyes. He knew exactly where the picture had come from.

Vernon and his new telephoto lens.

He imagined the image of his act rising up in a tray of chemicals. Slowly, he looked away from it. Dr. Morris could not know how he had changed since that moment. He could make no protest or denial.

"I have no choice," Dr. Morris said flatly. "I'd always thought that even if you weren't good with people, at least you worked well with the apes. Thank God Henry, who does Vernon's darkroom work, has promised not to say anything."

Douglas was rising from the chair. He wanted to tear the picture out of her hands because she still held it up to him. He didn't want to see it. He wanted her to ask him if he had changed, that it would never happen again, that he understood he'd been wrong.



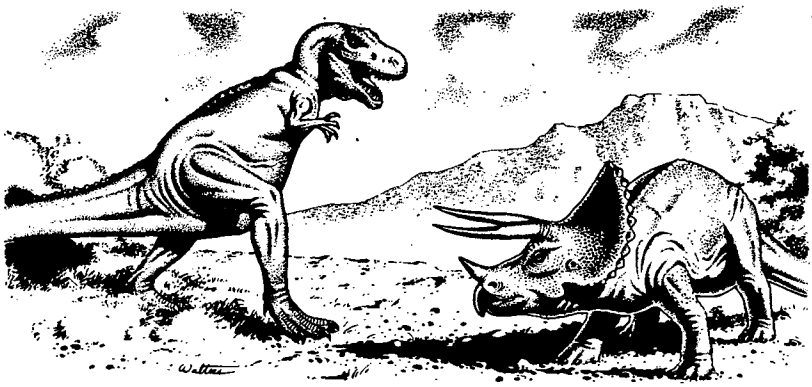
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But her eyes were flat and shuttered against him. "We'll send your things," she said.

He paused at his car and saw two big red shapes—one coppery orange, one chocolate red—sitting in the trees. Vernon bellowed out a groan that ended with an alien burbling. It was a wild sound full of the jungle and steaming rain.

Douglas watched Annie scratch herself and look toward chimps walking the land beyond their boundary fence. As she started to turn her gaze his direction, he ducked into his car.

Angrily driving away, Douglas thought, why should an ape understand me any better than a human? ●



MOVING? If you want your subscription to *IAsfm* to keep up with you, send both your old address and your new one (and the ZIP codes for both, please!) to our subscription department: Box 1933, Marion OH 43306.



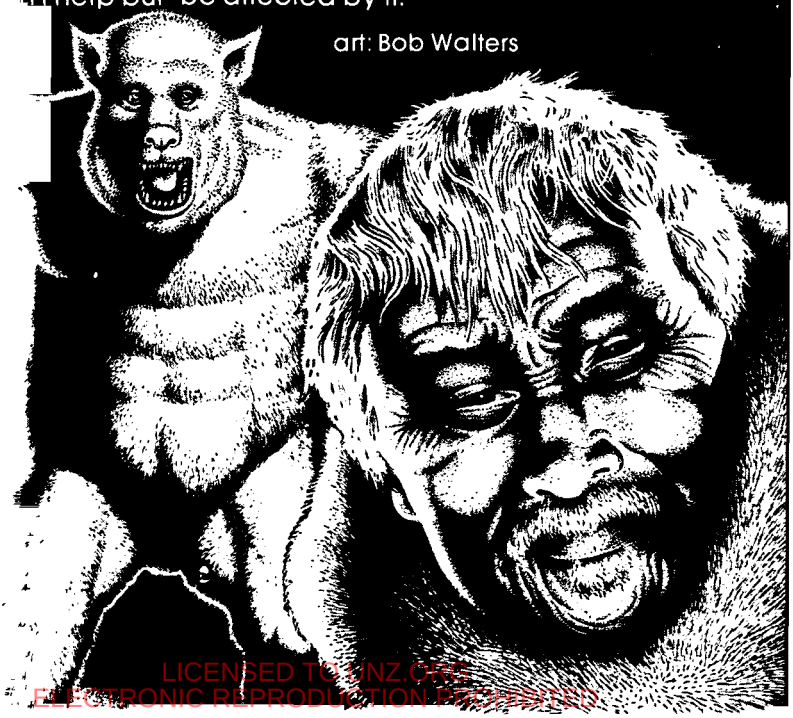
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Y CRAZY
# THER WHO
# CARES ALL THE
# OMEN AWAY

by Jack C. Haldeman II

ys when this story could happen
way are vanishing fast, along with
he culture of the Inuit people.
hey are gone even now. This poignant tale passes
ents, nor rams home any morals, yet we think
t help but be affected by it.

art: Bob Walters



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My father is old-fashioned. He will never be any different. He sticks with the dogs, even though it is a crazy thing to do.

But he is an old man, what does he know? I have my snowmobile and it works fine. It never bites me or has puppies. It never steals food. I've had it for five years and except for the time I met the talking bear it has never given me any trouble. Dogs always give me trouble. I have never much cared for them.

Life is different now. Change with the times, I always tell my father. He says that what was good enough for his father is good enough for him. I think he likes to suffer. He is a stubborn man and stuck in his ways. He wears clothes of animal skins while I have nice boots and a jacket I bought at the Hudson's Bay Store. Who do you think is warmer, I ask him on cold days. He just grunts at me and stares into the fire. I think he likes my rifle, though. There are limits to how stubborn a man can be.

The winters are cold on the delta and I don't like them much. My father is always finding things for me to do. If I am not running the trap lines I am skinning animals. I tell my father that skinning animals is woman's work. Do you see a woman here, he asks me. There is no answer to that. He has scared them all away. He is old and set in his ways. He could not break in a new woman even if he found one foolish enough to have him. All the women in the village know him too well. He will never get one of them. All the young women stay away from me. I will never get one as long as I live in the house of my father, and his father—my grandfather—lived to be ninety-two. I may be an old man before I get a woman.

There are three seasons in the delta; a short spring, a short summer and an endless winter. In the spring the sun comes back and I work hard for my father. The animals are moving then and we are very busy. The fish nets must be checked twice a day and the seals tear holes in them. I spend much time repairing the nets. That, too, is woman's work; but what can I do?

The summer is too short. In the summer I work construction for the crazy whites. They fly me to towns far away and pay me lots of money. The work is easy compared to what I have to do for my father. I sleep in a real bed and drink strong beer. There are movies and dances in the towns. I try to meet women, but they always ask me if I live alone. I am afraid to lie, so I tell them I live with my father. They ask his name and then it is all over. My father is not only stubborn, he is crazy. He was crazy before we saw the talking bear. There is not a person in the delta who has not heard of my father. This will always cause me problems.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One time I tried to lie and I took a girl to a dance. First we saw a movie with Elvis Presley and when the lights came on they put the projector away and we moved all the chairs to the walls. I like Elvis Presley. She thought I lived alone. There was only one store in that town and during the week we bought supplies there and on the weekend we saw movies and danced in the same place. I like to dance and the girl was pretty. But when the phonograph started, two boys from my village came in. They told the girl who I was and I had to fight them. The owner made us go outside to do this and I got mud all over my good clothes. The girl would have nothing to do with me. She laughed at me while she stood with the other girls. I was ashamed to be caught in such a lie and I never did it again. The rest of that short summer was very long.

Although my father is crazy and stubborn as the walrus, he is not a bad person. He works me hard, but has never asked me to do anything he would not do himself if he was thirty years younger. Sometimes in the winter when I have finished running the trap lines and skinned all the animals and fixed the holes in the roof and repaired the stove and made dinner we will sit by the fire and talk.

My father is not much of a talker. He says that when he was young he was foolish and wasted his words. He may be right. We could have used a few less words about the bear. Maybe then people would not laugh at us and I could have found me a woman to do the work around here.

My father sits by the fire and grunts. I can tell that he is ready to talk and I have finished all my work. I bring in my beer from outside to thaw and I find my father's bottle. He does not use many words these days and has to work up to it. I put the bottle beside him and open a beer. It is full of ice. I push a log onto the fire. The nights are long when my father decides to talk.

We drink in silence. I stir the fire. The second beer does not have as much ice in it. My father pours his whisky into a tin cup and sips it slowly. He does not look away from the fire. Once he told me he could see all his dead ancestors in the fire. I do not know how they could fit. The third beer has no ice at all in it. The dogs are howling and I know the star has come up. It is the dead of winter. My father pours another drink and I sip my beer. I like talking with my father. It is easier than working.

I put another log on the fire and bring in two more beers. It looks like we will have a long talk tonight. Our shadows dance on the walls. My father sips his whisky and I open another beer.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is good we have this time together. He is not so bad. He is warming up.

"I remember the bear," he says at last without looking up from the fire. He is through talking, probably for the night. He does not waste words.

There have been many bears in our lives, but I know the bear he means. There have been brown bears and white bears, there have been bears of all sizes. Some bears have torn our nets apart, others have carried animals from our traps. One spring a bear tore down our tent and I had to chase it away. That was before I got such a nice rifle. I am sure my father likes my rifle, though he has never said so. I can tell he likes it when he looks at it. Last summer a bear ate all our fish. We have known many bears, but only one that talked. That is the one he remembers.

It was several winters ago, the same winter that my uncle broke his leg. That is how I remember when it happened. My uncle has only broken his leg once. He is a lucky man and not nearly so stubborn as my father.

I had come back from running the trap line north of the village and I was not in a good mood. It had been snowing for two days and was not packed down yet. There are hills, too, and it is hard to get my snowmobile back in there. My father says he never has any trouble with the dogs, but I am sure he just says that to make me mad. The truth is that he never runs the line north of the village, even with the dogs. He only runs the line down by the river which is frozen solid all winter and very easy to do. I was in a bad mood because I had been out all day and had gotten stuck twice. All I had were three small muskrats and the foot of a fox. It was not my best day. I was in no mood to hear crazy things.

He came back while I was skinning the second muskrat. I had already thrown the fox foot away. He wanted me to come down by the river with him. It was starting to snow again. I did not want to go.

He said that he had not finished running the trap line because he saw something odd. He would not tell me what it was. He said he also saw a fire and I knew that was crazy. There is nothing down there to burn except for the old fishing cabins and they would be under the snow by now. I felt his forehead and smelled his breath. He did not have a fever and he was not drunk. I did not know what to think. It was not like him to come back without finishing the lines. I did not believe him about the fire. Although I did not want to go, I knew I would have to. The animals in the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

traps must be collected quickly or they will be eaten or stolen. Still, I was not happy to go out in the snow again with a crazy man, even if he was my father. It had already been a long day and I was tired.

We had to argue, of course. I wanted to take the snowmobile and he wanted to take the dogs. The snowmobile would be faster and we could finish the traps and look at this odd thing and his crazy fire and be back that much sooner. He would hear nothing of this. He does not trust snowmobiles. He hardly trusts the motor on his canoe and he has been using that since before I was born. He was firm about the dogs and I could not change his mind. I would not back down either, so to save face we took them both. He had his dogs and I had my snowmobile. I would have beat him to the river if I had not run into that snowbank.

I followed him down the river for a long time. It is the best place to put your traps and those men in the village who have the most importance set their traps closest to town. Our traps are way down the river, past the third fork. It is not easy being the son of a crazy man.

It was snowing harder and by the time we reached the traps I could smell the fire. It was an impossible thing. My father looked very smug and I thought he would rub it in, but he didn't. He was saving that for the bear.

We worked the sled and the snowmobile up the bank of the river and I looked for the fire. I could hardly see my father through the snow, much less some impossible fire. The dogs were being difficult, but my father got them under control. He lead the way and I followed him.

I could not tell you how far we went, or even which direction it was. The snow was blowing very hard and I was having trouble keeping up. My engine was coughing out black smoke. Finally it stopped and I had to call my father to come back and get me. It was very embarrassing. He laughed and wanted me to ride on the sled like a woman. I was embarrassed, but not that embarrassed. I ran along the side of the sled like he did.

By now I was lost but my father kept going. He has a sense of direction I will never have. He has never been lost in his life. Even far from home he knows north from south. It didn't matter that we couldn't see anything in the snow, he knew where he was going. He might be crazy, but even a crazy man can know where he is.

Suddenly we came out of the snow. It was another impossible thing. The snow just stopped. We were at the edge of a circle ten



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

times bigger than our village. It was still snowing outside the circle but where we stood the air was calm and cold. I looked up and could see stars. It was like looking up a chimney.

In the middle of the circle was the fire. It was brighter than the sun in the middle of summer. There was not much smoke. It hurt to look, but I couldn't turn my eyes away. My father asked if I believed him now and I had to say yes. The only thing I have ever seen that burned as brightly was an airplane that crashed in the mountains one year. Whatever this was, it was much bigger. The way it was burning there wouldn't be much left of it.

"Do you still think your father is a crazy person?" he asked me.

I had to think about that for a minute. Out of politeness I shook my head. He had shown me the impossible fire all right, but he had also done many crazy things in the past.

He grinned at me, rubbing it in. He looked very proud.

"Now I will show you the bear," he said, and I knew he was crazy.

"What bear?" I said. We were too far from the sea for a white bear and it was the wrong time of year for the others.

He looked like he had a big secret. "The *talking* bear," he said.

I started to back away from him. There is no predicting what a crazy man will do, even if he's your own father.

"He was over this way," said my father, walking across the frozen ground.

I followed him. What else could I do? You have to be respectful of your father, even if his brain isn't right. I held back, though, and let him go first. There is a limit to my respect.

"Here he is," said my father.

I took a good look before I went any closer. There was something on the ground I couldn't quite make out. It could have been a bear. It was the right size. I felt brave so I went to my father and looked over his shoulder. It was a funny-colored bear and his fur was too short.

"I have returned, mister bear," said my father. "I have brought my son so that he can see what a great man his father is. Only a great man could find such a wondrous animal."

"Did you shoot this bear?" I asked my father.

He looked offended. "One would be a fool to do such a thing," he said. "A talking bear must have a very strong spirit."

I could tell by the way he was talking that he was afraid of the bear's spirit. I did not blame him. A bear's spirit is no small thing, even one who does not talk.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This bear does not look well," I said and it was true. I have seen better bears in my life.

"My son has the eyes of a hawk," my father said. I do not think he meant it as a compliment. "This animal has many broken bones."

That was also true. The bear's legs did not look right. They could have been broken. I had still not heard him talk and I did not believe my father. He had found a funny bear, that was all. Twice I have trapped muskrats with extra toes. A funny animal is no big deal.

"Talk to my son, mister bear," said my father and I had to try hard not to laugh. This would have made my father very angry and he would have made me walk back. This I did not want to do. The bear opened its eyes.

I had never seen a bear with blue eyes. This was a new thing. I could see why my father feared this bear's spirit.

"Talk to my son," said my father. "When he hears you he will not think he has a crazy father."

The bear moaned and sat up. It seemed to have a hard time doing this. The bear pointed to the fire and make a sing-song noise.

"What is he doing?" I asked my father.

"The bear is talking," he said.

"Talking? What is he saying?"

"I told you the bear was talking," said my father. "I did not say I could understand the bear."

I watched the bear very closely. I thought if I stared at him the words might make sense. He pointed to the fire and then he pointed to a star. I listened very hard and could not understand the bear.

"This bear may talk," I said. "But he does not make much sense."

"Do you want everything, son?" asked my father. "I have found us a talking bear and there will be many stories and songs about this bear. My name will be well known all over the delta. People will bring us food to hear my true account of this bear. There will be much whisky and plenty women."

Women! I should have known that nothing my father plans ever turns out the way he thinks it will, but all I could think about was the women that would come. I was tired of skinning the animals.

"Will there really be women?" I asked.

"Many women," he said. "More than your fingers, more than



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your toes. The women love a good story and they can't keep their hands off a good hunter. Or a good hunter's son," he added and I was hooked.

We sat and talked of the stories and the women. My father brought a bottle of whisky from his parka and we drank while we planned it out. We would be the subject of many songs. Our names would always be mentioned when they discussed the talking bear.

While we were talking the bear got very excited. It stood on its hind legs as I have seen bears do. It waved its arms in great circles and talked very loudly. It kept pointing to the star and saying things that only another bear could understand. It also pointed to the fire, which was getting smaller now. My father had decided to call a meeting at the village when we returned. He would tell them the true account of the bear with some extra things to make him look good. Our fame would start and there would be many women. I was very interested in this plan. I was so interested I almost missed it when the bear yelled and fell down.

"I believe our bear is dead," I told my father.

"It is *my* bear," he said and did not look up. "I was the one who found it."

"Nonetheless it is a dead bear," I said. I got up to make sure. The bear looked very dead. The dogs were howling back where we had left the sled. I have never liked dogs.

"We will have to do something," I said.

"Why?" said my father.

"A minute ago we had a talking bear," I said. "Now we have a dead bear."

My father stood up and his face was dark. A dead talking bear was not as valuable as a live talking bear, but still there would be stories and women.

"We must eat the heart of the bear," he said.

I thought about that for a minute and remembered the blue eyes and the big fire. This was one spirit I didn't want to offend.

My father took his knife and went to the bear. Normally he would have had me do this part, but this was *his* bear and a special bear so he did it himself. He looked inside the bear for a long time and what he brought out did not look much like the heart of a bear. Still, I am not a stupid son and when my father told me it was the bear's heart I took it. It was not even the right color. I cut off a piece and ate it.

I hope it will not anger the bear's spirit if I say it tasted terrible.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I have eaten many things in my life, but none worse. I have eaten the green soup and was at Kendall Island the time four people died from eating the bad whale. The bad whale was very tasty compared to this.

My father ate some and made a face. We threw pieces of the bear to the dogs to keep them quiet. It started snowing again where we stood. I could no longer see the stars. We decided to return to the village and come back later for my snowmobile and the bear.

My father was very sly when we got back to the village. He would not tell anybody what we had seen until everyone was gathered in the big hut. He started the story well and if he built up his part to make him look braver it was no more than anyone expected. He was doing fine until he got to the part about the bear. Everyone thought this was a great joke and there was much laughing. When they realized he was serious there was even more laughing. I hid my head in shame. It is hard being the son of a crazy man, even when he is telling the truth.

They laughed so hard that my father and I left. When we got home we could still hear them. They had a party that lasted a long time. They made up songs about my father and the bear but they were not the songs we wanted to hear. It seemed to me that the women laughed the hardest.

Two days later it stopped snowing and we went back. I found my snowmobile but there was no sign of the bear. We decided the wolves must have eaten him and that was just as well. My father and I had seen enough of bears for a while. That was when he stopped talking so much, but by then it was too late.

My snowmobile had a broken wire. It was the wire that runs to the thing that screws into the other thing. I do not know the names for these parts, but I can fix them. We learn this at an early age because there is no other way to do things. Parts have to be flown in and they are expensive. My father will still not ride the snowmobile. He is a stubborn man.

My father was right about some things, though. We are well-known across the delta and our names are linked with the story of the bear. This has not been a good thing, however. I am tired of doing woman's work.

My beer is empty. My father sits staring into the fire. He is chewing on a dried fish from last spring and sipping his whisky. He is not a bad man, only crazy.

"I remember the bear," he says.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am surprised he is so talkative tonight. It is good to sit with him.

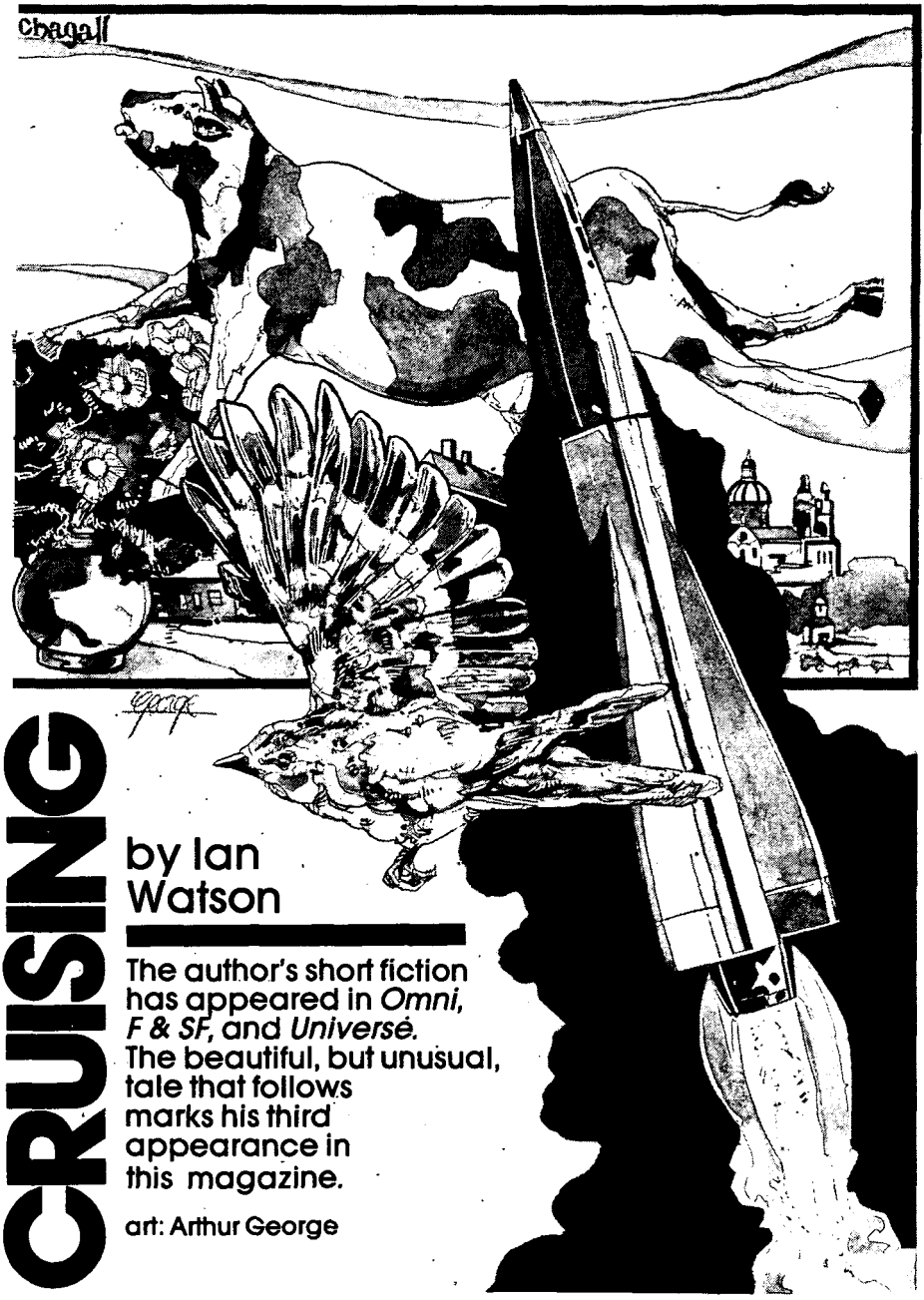
"I remember the bear, too, father," I say.

In the quiet that follows I think of the women he has scared away. It is nicer to think about the women than the bear. The bear was nothing but trouble.

The fire is getting low. In this light my father does not look old. He does not even look crazy. He looks simply like my father. He is a good man and he means well, but I still miss the women.

I go outside to get another beer. The dogs are howling and the sky is clear. The wolves are answering the dogs. I look up and see the star that the bear pointed at. Every time I see the star I get a funny feeling inside of me. It is like the feeling I get in the summer when I am away from home and want to see my father. It is like that feeling, only stronger. It is a sad feeling and I can't explain it. ●

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




# CRUISING

by Ian Watson

The author's short fiction has appeared in *Omni*, *F & SF*, and *Universe*. The beautiful, but unusual, tale that follows marks his third appearance in this magazine.

art: Arthur George

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From where I shelter, hidden underneath my concrete burster slab, I can feel the swallows flocking outside. Above my airfield they mill wildly in the sky. Their beaks click like tiny castanets as they gulp a stream of gnats to put a last gram of fat on their bodies before they undertake the great journey. The swallows are drunk with a sweet panic. They're a host of fairy children dancing streamers round a hidden maypole which holds up the sky; right now, they're busily unwinding the maypole of the year.

My mind goes out to them. "The fogs are coming! We smell the fogs!" they cry.

"How fat the berries on the bushes!"

"Wind's from the South today. It calls!"

"Can you hear the dunes of the desert booming? Can you hear the screaming of the apes?"

"Can you hear the cough of the camel and the roar of the lion?"

"We'll be late!"

I understand them perfectly. My own brain is very like their brains. In common with the swallows I know in advance every rise and dip, every river and valley of my destined route. Their instincts are my instincts; but mine are held in check. How I envy their freedom to migrate, even if it spells death for them.

Am I the only one of my flight to overhear the swallows? Am I the only one to feel excitement, frustration, jealousy? Perhaps. In our mighty mobile metal nest my three companions (for want of a better word) sit silent and inert. No emotions leak from them. Any thoughts they think are masked and secret.

But not the thoughts of the swallows. Winding themselves up like stones swung round and round on strings, the swallows race through figure-eights.

"*Tswit! Sweet, Sweet!*" one of them cries out. This is the call to take wing and fly south, forever south, until they arrive in the sweet heat of southern Africa.

I decide to name this swallow Amy. I follow her with my mind. Amy, wonderful Amy, flier beyond compare.

She fans her tail. She turns in full flight to dart in a different direction, wild to flap her wings in another quarter of the sky. She snatches a tiny spider floating on a silken thread.

In her breast she feels a strange kind of hurt. This is a lovely hurt, teasing her wonderfully; it will draw her ever onwards.

"I can't bear to stay another day!" she tells her mate Nijinsky. (I name him for his nimbleness.) Amy's voice is the chattering of a mountain stream, the babbling rush of water over pebbles.

She and twenty others dart down to the line of telephone wires



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the perimeter of the airfield. There they chatter about their preset route: the mountain passes of the Pyrenees, the dusty plains of New Castile, the apes screaming from the Rock of Gibraltar. Next, those desert forts and oases. Then the dry Sahara, with such stunning oven-heat reflecting from its sands that many swallows will die on the wing. Many will drop from the air like stones.

Naturally, Amy and Nijinsky are worried about the youngest of their brood, whom I call Pavlova.

"The desert may be wider this year," Amy twitters. "Last year it was wider than the year before. But we can't stay. Soon the cold will come here. When it comes, it'll kill all the insects."

"But is Pavlova chubby enough yet?"

"Chubby or not, we all have to go."

"Oh, it puzzles me, Amy, that we can never act in any other way! What we must do, we must do. Is it the same for every living creature?"

"But doing what you *must* do is what living is all about!" cries Amy in astonishment. "That's the perfect joy of existence." She preens quickly under her wing. "If the world quit turning, then a swallow might stop flying! But only then. Don't worry: we'll all get there safely. It'll be the most wonderful flight ever flown. I know it in my heart."

Swallows are spaced out on the wires as neatly as soldiers on parade. They all wear the same dark steel-blue uniforms with frock-tail coats, the same rust-red caps and chinstraps, the same soft snowy breastplates.

"I'm dying to see this desert of yours," burbles little Pavlova. "I mean, I can *already* see it in my mind's eye. I'm not scared. I'll skim it in a day."

"No, nor two days, either," says Nijinsky. "Your mind's eye's out of date. Every year the Sahara desert grows greater."

Momentarily I pity these swallows; my mind's eye is never out of date. But what do I care about the Sahara desert? Africa isn't mapped in *my* mind. *My* migration route lies eastward.

Something is happening! Down here in the bunker my soldiers are scrambling into their armored jeeps, my maintenance men into their trucks. My metal nest awakens, engine roaring. The bunker doors descend over the empty debris pit.

And they drive me out, under the open sky!

Presently we're on a country road, crunching southward away from the airfield: me and my three mute siblings in one trans-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

porter, four more of us in another, together with a whole convoy of wagons, trucks, and jeeps.

It's been a good summer. The harvest is all safely in. Golden hay lies piled in great rolls in the barns. My swallows have seen the stubble burning off fiercely, reddening the sky by night, clouding it with smoke by day. Now I observe how most of the blackened fields have already been turned over by the plough.

I spy rams in a pasture, serving the grazing ewes, marking their woolly backs with blue and red wax. The rams wear tight harnesses which hold the colored wax. The sheep glance at our convoy, then lose interest.

Reaching out with my mind, I sense that Amy has just forked her tail straight and true—and leapt into flight. After her leap all the other swallows. For the moment has come. Only Nijinsky glances back at the little village beyond my airfield where he and Amy nested this summer in the eaves of a farmhouse. He glances once, but already it seems as if the village has receded infinitely far away. As indeed it has. Already it's on the very far side of the map in his mind. Away beyond the whole of Africa. Even if Nijinsky wanted, he couldn't now turn back.

Let me not be turned back, either!

While my transporter navigates the byways, heading south by east, I follow Amy in her flight. And I begin to hope.

An hour later our convoy turns off the country lane, up a broad woodland ride to a clearing surrounded by fir trees.

The soldiers fan out through the woods. My launch officer tips me up in the steel nest, pointing east. And we wait. And wait. A few nearby soldiers pace about, nervous as swallows themselves. They sweat. Occasionally they joke. Or urinate.

Amy, Nijinsky, and Pavlova link up with a straggling line of other migrants on the sky-road. Oh yes, there are roads through the sky. Quite narrow roads: these are the caravan trails of the blue. Such roads rise or sink at the whim of the wind. My flock of swallows is flying high now to catch a side breeze from due east.

They fly quite straight, with little swerving or veering, hardly any capricious jinking. Instead of chasing insects as before, now they let the insects come to them. Bristling out the tiny contour feathers at the sides of their mouths, they funnel their fuel in to a scooping beak.

*Click*: a fly.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Click*: a little moth borne aloft by some mood of the wind.
*Click*: a winged beetle.
Lifting and thrusting, they overtake swifts and martins. Upstroking, they feather the blades of their wings to lessen air resistance. I understand all this very well, though I have never flown before. Below, the curves of the rolling hills are a caress.

And suddenly I do burst free—with the power of a million swallows. A second later, my nozzle controls start to steer me on course. Five seconds later, my fins flip out. A few seconds more, and my wings swing into place to balance me. I'm the first to leave the nest. After three years of waiting, at last I can migrate! My booster drops. My jet commences. I gulp air hungrily.
At last. I'm a bird.
Swiftly I skim forest and water meadow, flat fields and heathland. I swoop past a solitary windmill, its sails pointing like a road-sign. Long before Amy and Pavlova and Nijinsky are anywhere near the coast, I'm over a beach, then out across the blue chop and toss of the sea, exulting . . .

Whilst flying, Amy is dreaming of the reed beds of the Lualaba river down in Zambia. Survivors of the Sahara, replenished by the insects of Nigeria and the Congo, may roost a while along the Lualaba. They will cling to bending reeds, twittering at one another while in the dusk an elephant trumpets and the tick birds peck vermin from its hide. Amy will dart into the river for a quick dip to clean herself, ever wary of the snap of the crocodile.
But she isn't there yet. The wind threatens to veer. If a strong tail wind gets behind swallows they need to find a wire or reed to roost on till the wind shifts or drops. Otherwise they'll be pushed along too quickly for the map unrolling in their minds. They'll overfly it, get lost.
No such problem for me! I fly faster than any normal wind. My mind-map is impeccable. As soon as I've crossed the sea, I shall scan my map in mere fractions of time too small to be called seconds.
For her part, Amy rises higher where the wind is slower. I rise slightly too, since waves are swelling.

Within half an hour I'm over the polders of the Netherlands. Fifteen minutes later, and I'm across the German border, commencing my long sweep across the German plains. Here my map


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clicks into place. The terrain matches it perfectly. Farms flash by, bare fields, cows and churches . . .

In the City Park of Johannesburg there are reed beds. It is there that Amy will join up with fellow migrants arriving by way of the Nile valley from furthest Siberia. For in Joburg the two main streams of migration flow together in the southern spring. In Joburg in the southern autumn those two streams part again, like twin forks of a swallow's tail. Last year in Joburg Amy and Nijinsky met and roosted a while with Ivan Swallow, from Irkutsk beside Lake Baikal. (I fantasize, of course.)

I dream along with Amy while I cruise over Germany, comparing my mind-map with the territory from time to time. Everything is as it should be. Of course. I'm a specialized instrument—and why, so is Amy too! She and I, we're both designed for cruising. For a life on the wing. Only with peril and hardship can she ever alight on terra firma. Earlier this year, when she was shuffling clumsily about on the ground using her wings as crutches whilst she scooped up wet mud for her nest, an evil tabby cat nearly had her for breakfast.

Amy's making progress towards the seaside, but I'm already over Poland. Flying fifteen meters low. I swing around a pimple of a hill. A farmer stares at me in shock. A policeman jumps from his car and empties his pistol into the air; but I'm already past him and away.

Far behind me something flashes as brightly as the sun. I'm soon buffeted by a fierce wind which presses me down almost into the soil. But I recover my balance and my proper height.

Something bright and burning has blinded Amy! I lose touch with her; there's interference in the air and in my mind . . .

Momentarily I feel a pang of grief that Amy won't even reach the Channel crossing—let alone the breezy Gavarnie valley with its pouncing hawks; let alone the Rock lit by golden flames when the Levanter wind tethers banners of sunset vapor to the Moroccan peaks. I fly on, burning such emotions out. I'm stronger than she is. I consult my mind-map again. Cruising, cruising.

Where are you, Amy?

Amy, beautiful Amy!

Ach, beautiful me . . .

Russia!



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forests of oak, beech and fir . . .

I'm dimly aware of my destination already: a town called Vitebsk. That's where I'll roost.

Once more I'm faintly aware of Amy far away. She lies panting on a patch of mud. Her feathers are all burnt. She can't see. It's a wonder she's still alive. Soon she'll die of shock.

Oh, this is my cruise of a lifetime! Here's the West Dvina river. The little town of Beshenkovichi lies by a sharp bend where the stream alters course from south to north. Only sixty kilometers further to Vitebsk. Five minutes, slightly less.

And now Vitebsk lies ahead. So my mind-map is coming to an end. Nothing exists beyond it. Nowhere.

So soon! Yet as Amy said, 'Doing what you *must* do is what living is all about!' A mayfly only lives one day—a few hours of one day—and is complete.

One minute left.

Vitebsk is the town where the painter Marc Chagall was born. He imagined cows flying in the sky.

There'll be cows flying through the sky today, for sure. ●

## NEXT ISSUE

Our January issue of *IAsfm* promises to be quite an exciting one. Our cover story, "Blued Moon," is by Connie Willis, a recent winner of both the Hugo and Nebula awards. We'll also have our winning Viewpoint contest entry, and stories by Tanith Lee, George Alec Effinger, and others. Pick up your copy. On sale December 20, 1983.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# WINGS

1.
My name is Icarus.
Today I am a drifter.
Tomorrow
I will be a corpse.

2.
My arms are sails,
and they glitter
only when I remember—
silicate cells so fine
they weigh as feathers
buoyed in a wind of light.

3.
I was my own invention:
unsuited for Lagrangean city-states,
I clamped into life-support,
walked highwires between stars,
secretly pieced photovoltaics
with desperate precision.
I tested the fit,
brushed wingtips delicate as smoke,
shaped silver mosaics of nebulous,
reflected incandescence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I aimed my wings.
Furled—unfurled.
Pursued a thousand
different eclipses.
Changed course
with the crook of an elbow,
my intent
spelled in the mirrors
on my mylar skin.

4.
Landing at port, I would combust
in red watchlight beacons,
folding myself into human form . . .
Slaved only to the need for air.
Then, tiny in the great bays,
in the baritone hum of corpulent ships
I would rise, spectral, no more than a flash
flitting away, safe in my own
small majesty.

5.
Sweet air
rushes in my memory.
I have faded too long,
have flickered out; my sails hang limp.
I cannot go home again.
Once more
I have reached for Heaven
with open arms—
and flown too far:
soaring, lifeless . . .

Away
from the Sun.

**—Elissa L. A. Hamilton**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Norman Spinrad

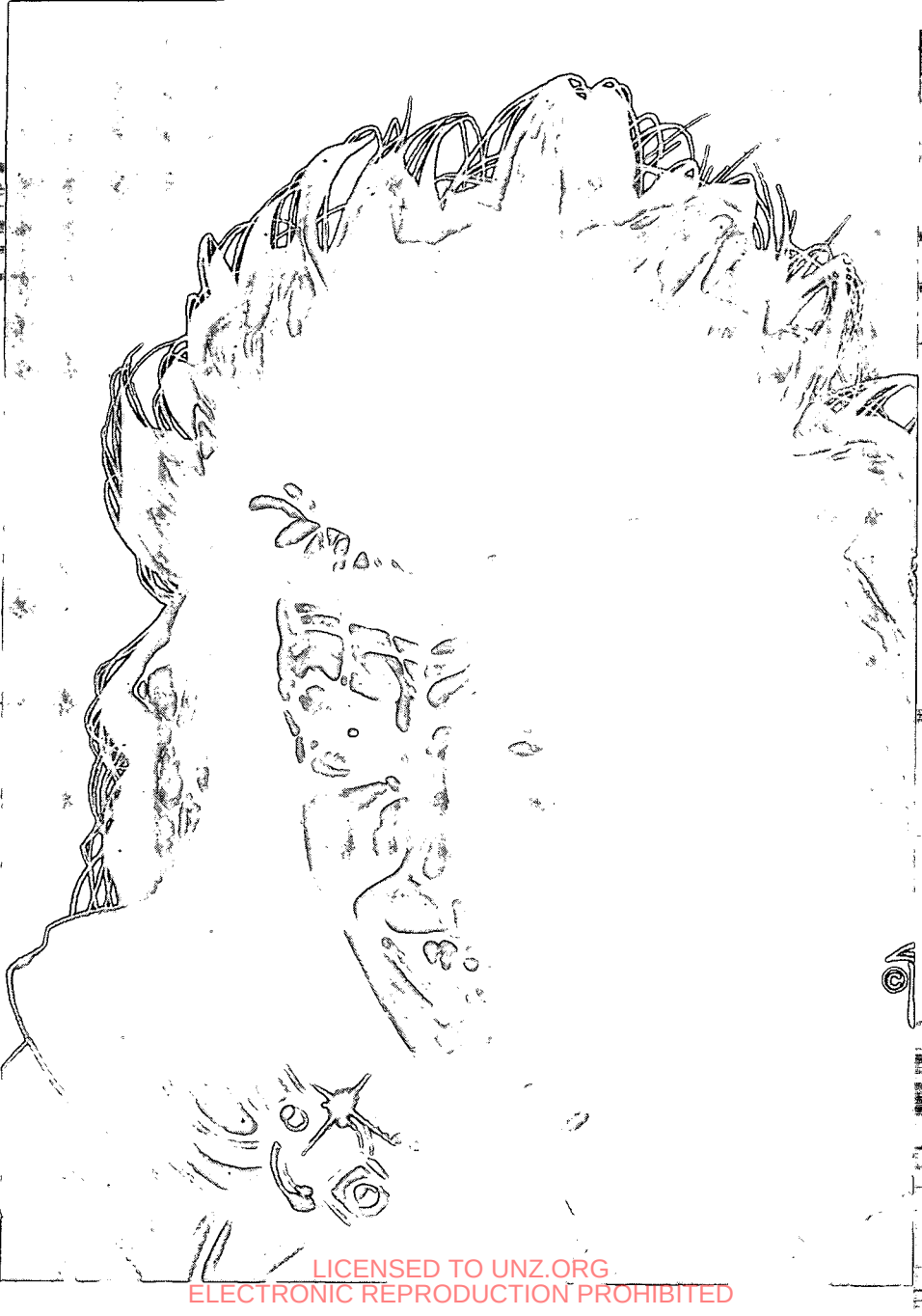
# STREET MEAT

Norman Spinrad is the author of ten novels, including *The Iron Dream*, currently banned in Germany, *Bug Jack Barron*, soon to become a Universal film directed by Costa-Gavras, and *The Void Captain's Tale*, his latest, currently out from Timescape Books.

art: Gary Freeman

A word of warning: What follows is not for the faint of heart. It is a gritty, all-too-realistic picture of life in New York City in the not-too-distant future. It's not a pleasant picture, and overall, this is not a pleasant story. Told from the point of view of two denizens of this urban nightmare, the language and the settings are true to the story's premise. However, Norman Spinrad is such a master of his craft that despite these factors, he manages to imbue the characters with both dignity and humor, letting them and the story rise above the squalor.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mal suerte and good, so it goes in La Vida, no, and sometimes a streetie can't tell which is going to lead to which.

Bad luck for Gonzo that he lost his kibble kard when a city cop caught him trying to boost a roasted rat from a peddler who had the mother on the pad. Could you believe it, a rat peddler with the dinero to pad one of New York's finest?

Maybe a smarter streetie than Gonzo wouldn't have had so much trouble featuring that. Manhattan was full of rats, natch, but those ratones had more street smarts than, say, the likes of Gonzo, and half of them were rabid, so rat-catching was not for everyone. But a guy with the cojones and the talent could bag the buggers free, roast 'em over a garbage fire, and get five bucks a pop free and clear. A king ratter with a tight culo for dinero who held his luck for five years might even save up the bread to put a down payment on a room, or anyway a share in one. So slipping the local muni ten on the side every week was just playing the percentages, the closest a streetie could come to having his very own zonie.

But the street smarts to comprend all this Gonzo did not have, and so while the ratter was looking the other way, he hooked a fat sizzling one off the grill, not getting ten feet before he was collared with the evidence dangling still steaming from his hand. Good luck and bad.

First offense for street snatch was loss of kard, second was six months in the South Bronx digging holes on a cup of kibble a day, at the end of which, if you were one of the 60 percent who survived, you were issued a special blue kard, which marked you as a two-timer. And if a blue-karder got busted, it was lobe-job time, muchacho.

So the bad luck was the bust, and the good luck was that Gonzo *did* have enough street smarts to comprend the instant justice system. Most blue-karders had the smarts to throw the marker away, figuring a cup of kibble a day courtesy of the Welfare was not worth the inevitability of a lobe-job if you were busted with a blue ticket on your person. But Gonzo had the smarts to figure that the best course was to stay the hell out of the South Bronx in the first place. So after he lost his red kard the first time, he had spent a starving six days stalking streeties until he could bash a legit red-karder and steal a new one.

So even though this was really his *second* bust, he had a red kard in his possession to lose, and escaped with nothing worse than kard konfiscation. And of course, loss of the rat.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And muy pronto, one piece of good luck seemed to lead to another.

Street sex was not ordinarily Gonzo's bag—not because of excess scruples, but because, with his skeletal frame, stinking threads, and face full of pimples, he was not exactly equipped for a prime career as street meat. But what he needed more than anything else right now was another kosher kard and the best place to boost one was the meat rack at 14th and Third.

These environs were about as low a meat rack as existed even in the Pig Apple, which was exactly the point. Any meat rack much more savory than this involved transactions between streeties and gainfully employed townies. Any market involving transactions between streeties and townies would be infested with muni cops, or even, if the market were patronized by pervos from a plush zone, by bad-ass zonies. Besides, townies, being employed, did not carry kibble kards.

Hard as it was for even Gonzo to comprend, Fourteen and Three was a meat rack in which the johns were *streeties*. Here *streetie* pervos could score for a joint or a jug or a stringy old pigeon, and the cops there don't need you and man they expect the same.

The good luck was that Gonzo scored a geek almost at once, and a feeble old sack of stuff at that. Leaning up against the wall of a burned out building like barely able to stand, this white-haired old slimepot, wearing a drape stitched together out of the same potato sacking his street bag was made of, leered out of an alley at Gonzo, dangling a half-eaten rat invitingly.

"Rat for a rack?" he croaked.

"Name your game."

"Gum-gum, giggles."

Well, any streetie willing to trade a rat for a rack was odds on to be carrying a kibble kard, who could ask for a better dig to do the dirt than this alley, and this gaf was in no shape to offer a tussle. As far as Gonzo was concerned, this was almost too good to be true.

The bad luck was that he was right.

Gonzo nodded his agreement and followed the gaf a few steps deeper into the alley. But as soon as the john began fumbling with his drape, Gonzo grabbed him around the throat with one paw, and stifled his scream with the other. Frog-marching his victim even deeper into the alley, he demanded: "Koff your kard!"

The old geek's mouth muttered against his palm.

"Yawp, you pervo, and I'll tear your tongue out," Gonzo said, removing the gagging hand.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The pervo giggled quietly. "Yock's on you, younger," he said. "Ain't carrying no kard." His face suddenly went through some weird transformation, as did his voice. "In point of fact, you foul creature, you've just assaulted a townie. It's a lobe-job for you, sonny, if you're caught."

"*Townie?* Geek like you's a townie, I'm a plush zone slummer!"

"Vice verse, villain," the old man gabbled. "*I'm* the plushie tushie, primed for prole place plunder. Slumming for sleazo sex, son, see the scene?"

Dimly, Gonzo saw the scene. He'd heard the word from the bird on this kind of turd. Rich townie pervos from some plush zone palace day-tripping the streeties, copping their sick kicks in streetie drag. On the other hand, it could be a scam to let him lam.

But with both hands on this dirty mother, it didn't really matter. A red flash went off in Gonzo's brain, bolts of lightning seared down his arms, and, gibbering and screaming curses in some primal language of formless and innocent rage, he bashed the pervo's head against the wall with a dull sickening thunk, and dropped the limp remains to the ground like a sack.

Running on red-hot automatic now, Gonzo snatched up his victim's street bag and rat, and fled up Third Avenue babbling and swearing, as if some cunning buried deep within his backbrain knew that no one on the sidewalks of good old New York was about to screw with a brain-burned screamer.

It was a *job*. She was a *townie*. That was all that Mary Smith knew and all she needed to know, or so she continually told herself at times like these. She owned an entire room in what had once been a luxury building on 78th and Riverside. There were twenty-five million people out of work in the US of A, and somewhere between five hundred thousand and two million streeties in New York who had neither jobs nor domiciles. Who thought themselves lucky when they got themselves a rat to supplement their kibble ration, assuming they even had kards. She was a townie. She had a job. She owned a co-op room with thirty-seven years to go on a forty-year mortage.

In point of fact, while this was all that Mary *needed* to know, when she let herself, she knew far more than that.

She knew that "Smith" was a "family name" she had given herself to celebrate the miracle of obtaining employment. She knew that she had grown up possessing only the name "Maria." She knew that until five years ago she had been a streetie, sur-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

viving by wits, hooking, and the considerable jungle judo she had been forced to pick up in the process. She knew that it had been only a fantastic piece of luck which had placed her in position to rescue a lousy plushie tushie from a mugger by practical application of these street fighting skills and so secure this job as a zonie.

Of course she was *never* unaware that she was a zonie. She carried an old Uzi machine pistol which required constant maintenance. Six days a week, she reported to work at the headquarters of the Upper East Side Security Zone Guard Force. Six days a week, she guarded the frontier or shepherded Upper East Side plushie tushies on their forays beyond the borders of the Security Zone.

She also knew, when she let herself, that she had killed and/or wounded any number of streeties in the line of duty. What she *never* let herself know was her body count. What she also never allowed herself to ponder, not even for an instant, was the moral ambiguity of being an ex-streetie protecting loathsome plushie tushies from the very reality from which she herself had escaped.

Indeed, she tried not to think of her charges as "plushie tushies" at all. They were Clients. They were People of Means. They were the Source of Employment. They had made her a Townie.

But at times like these, her double-think wavered. It was plain impossible to think of Mrs. Gloria Van Gelder as anything but a plushie tushie. In fact it was impossible to think of this woman as anything but a brainless, arrogant, gold-plated bitch.

What else could you call a woman who required the services of a helicopter, a pilot, and a zonie to take her and her wretched cocker spaniel Dearie back and forth to the Ellis Island Recreation Zone in order to let the little monster frolic in the grass and pee against a real tree? The fuel bill alone was probably the equivalent of three months' salary for Mary. And while a million streeties subsisted on kibble and the occasional rat, the wretched beast, sleek, fat, and yapping, devoured enough horsemeat daily to treat three streeties to a deluxe banquet.

And now, as the helicopter clattered over the gray canyons of Manhattan in the late afternoon twilight, the dog was squirming and yammering on the fat woman's lap as if its bladder was once again filled to bursting. Mary only hoped that the creature would piss right on Mrs. Gloria Van Gelder's pink satin jumpsuit. Or better yet, decide to take a dump.

Mrs. Van Gelder, however, now decided to forestall any such



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

catastrophe. "We must land immediately," she told the pilot. "Dearie has to make a wee-wee."

"I'm afraid that's impossible, madam," the mournful-faced pilot said. "We're over an un-Zoned part of Manhattan. We'll be home in a few minutes, Dearie will just have to wait until then."

"Dearie is a *dog*, you imbecile!" Mrs. Van Gelder shrieked. "Do you think you can explain that to *him?* Do you think I intend to let him *make* all over me? You will land this machine at once! Right down there in that big burned out crater! Down! *Now!*"

"He's right, Mrs. Van Gelder," Mary said. "That's not a safe area."

The plushie tushie stared at her with eyes of blue gimlet steel. "You're a zonie, aren't you?" she said thinly. "You've got a machine gun, don't you? What do *you people* think we pay you for? So that my little Dearie can piss on my pants?"

"I don't think—"

"You're not *paid* to think, you insolent creature!" Mrs. Gloria Van Gelder shouted. "You're paid to provide protection, and you, my man, are paid to fly this helicopter where I tell you to! Another word of argument out of either of you, and you can go back to eating kibble and dead rats! You will land at once!"

As if to agree with his mistress, Dearie began to make a horrible, whimpering keening sound. It was almost enough to make Mary bash its stupid brains out with the butt of her Uzi and then turn the business end on the dog's mistress.

*Almost* enough. Instead, she gritted her teeth against the sound and her fury and double-checked her weapon as the helicopter descended towards the country of the streeties.

"Son-of-a-bitch-culo-cabron-bastard-plushie-tushie-chingada-mother . . ."

Screaming more or less the same limited vocabulary of rage over and over again, Gonzo walked more slowly up Third Avenue now, flinging old newspapers, crushed beercans, wads of toilet tissue, and more amorphous high-class townie garbage from the pervo's street bag to the four winds.

For that was all that seemed to be in the bag—newspapers, empty aluminum cans, tampons, bits of cardboard, useless scraps of rag—a lot of townie crap without so much as an edible apple core or a gnawable rabbit bone, or any other potentially nutritive scrap of organic matter. As for the pervo's half-eaten rat, whoever had previously munched on it must have done his gobbling quite a while ago. Even Gonzo was not ready to tear the thing apart



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for what edible bits might conceivably remain, at least not yet. Though he wasn't ready to throw the rat away either, seeing as how it might just be possible to slip it to a blind beggar with a bad head cold in exchange for a butt or a belt of meth.

"Stinking-culo-mother-plushie-pervo-cabron-bitch-bastard!"

If Gonzo hadn't been too pissed off to think, he might just have been able to realize what deep shit he was really in. A *real* streetie's *real* street bag would be filled with useful items—pieces of cloth big enough to stitch into something, fresh rat bones, bits of firewood, a brick that could be used as a weapon, maybe even a book of matches, a homemade shiv, or some real chunks of ratmeat if you hit the jackpot—not old paper and plushie tushie garbage that could have only come from a Zone. No real street bag, this. Meaning no real streetie, the stiff he had left in the alley. Meaning that if he were caught, it wouldn't be the South Bronx or even a lobe-job, but a one-way token to Tube City, where, so the word from the bird had it, his meat would be used to give kibble what little flavor it had.

"Goddamn-madre-jumping-son-of-a-cabron-bitch-puta-*aargh!*"

Verbally exhausted but still livid with rage, and still loping aimlessly northward, Gonzo upended the street bag, grabbed the bottom, and whirled it around his head, spraying the last bits of crap all over himself and another nearby screamer—a stooped, white-haired old woman dressed only in a ragged robe of brown paper and caught in an angry argument with an invisible Virgin Mary.

Nothing unusual about that. The street was full of babblers and screamers as always, gibbering to themselves or to invisible companions, and no streetie survived very long reacting to anything so trivial as being showered with old paper and garbage from someone else's shit-fit.

But what *was* unusual—so unusual that it caused Gonzo to react once more to his environment and start thinking again—was that the dirty old chocha suddenly belly-whopped to the filthy pavement, grimy paw out-thrust to cover something that had clattered from the bag.

Moving with street smart instincts, Gonzo stomped on the hand with the full weight of his body, eliciting a liquid scream of pain, then kicked upward, catching the crone in the chops and flipping her over on her back, where she scrabbled and moaned like an overturned turtle.

And there on the cracked and filthy pavement was a metallic yellow coin. Prong a dong, a *subway token!*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A subway token! Five bucks in townie dinero! When the winter winds began to blow in a few months, could be worth a streetie's sweet life to risk the old Subterranio. Didn't snow down under the ground. Warm it wasn't, but you didn't freeze, either. Good suerte again! Good luck too that only this old chocha had seen it.

All this passed through Gonzo's brain as he was scooping up his treasure and stuffing it safely into his jock. Only then did he pause to think that it had to be more than good luck that twenty other street smart bonzos weren't even now kicking the crap out of him fighting for the prize. Only then did he dig that all the other streeties in the vecino were eyeing the sky and listening to the sound pound. And only after *that* did the clattering chattering penetrate his conscious attention.

Whop-whop, chop-chop, a goddamn *helicop* was descending through the jagged canyon of burnt-out factory loft buildings towards the big bomb crater on Third and 30th. And this was no machine gun chop from the muni cops, it was a *plushie tushie* helicop, and it must be in deep trouble to be dumb enough to come down here in a streetie zone like a fat juicy bone!

Snatching up the empty bag in case of swag, Gonzo joined the gleeful rush to greet this tasty meat dropping right down to the nonexistent mercy of the street.

A sinking feeling blossomed in Mary's stomach as the helicopter fluttered down past the burned-out buildings to land in a big rubble-strewn crater conveniently left as a landing pad by some thoughtful terrorist's bomb of days gone by. And not just from the drop. They were coming down right in the middle of a crowd of streeties; or rather a crowd of streeties, maybe as many as three dozen of them, was forming up around the crater as they came down into it.

The pilot moaned as the skids touched down. Dearie whimpered and squirmed in the lap of Mrs. Van Gelder, who cuffed him across the muzzle. "If you pee on me, I'll *kill* you, Dearie!" she shrieked.

"Don't turn off the engine!" Mary told the pilot as she cocked the Uzi. "This could get rough."

The three of them sat there for a long moment as the circle of filthy, haggard, hungry-eyed streeties hesitantly began to converge, step by halting step, on the grounded helicopter, whose rotors turned slowly and throbbingly overhead as if to provide ominous background music.

But that stupid plushie tushie bitch had all the street smarts of her pissy little lap-dog. "Well what are you waiting for, you



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idiot?" she said, jamming the leash into the hand of the ashen-faced pilot. "Go take Dearie for his walk before he makes all over."

Despairingly, imploringly, the pilot locked eyes with Mary for a long moment. She shrugged unhappily at him. "Make it fast," she told him, brandishing her Uzi upwards like a spear. "Stay right by the helicopter and I'll cover you."

"Mama mia . . ." the pilot groaned. But he popped the canopy, and, as Mary stood up levelling the Uzi at the streeties as menacingly as she could manage, he snatched up the dog and stepped out onto the ground.

The circle of streeties seemed to ooze backwards a few steps as they caught sight of the machine pistol. But then, with an audible sigh of collective lust, they seemed to flow forward again as they saw the cocker spaniel already squatting and pissing as the pilot set it down.

Street smart memories that she thought she had lost, that she had tried so hard to lose, flooded in on Mary. She knew all too well what was going through those perpetually-starved brains out there. A dog! An actual dog! *Forty pounds of meat!* Twenty or thirty rats' worth, sleek and fat and well-fed, enough for three months of luxury, maybe more if you didn't make a pig of yourself! She could all but feel the drool forming in her own mouth out of time-warped sympathy.

"Pero!" someone shouted. "Pero, pero, pero!"

"Dog!"

"MEAT!"

"MEAT! MEAT! MEAT!" more than one voice shouted.

Then they were all chanting it, inching towards the helicopter and working up their courage for a charge. "MEAT! MEAT! MEAT!"

Mary waved her Uzi in the air. "Get back!" she shouted. "Get back, you dirty—"

A chunk of stone came sailing up out of the anonymity of the mob, missing both her and the helicopter. Then a brick hit the canopy, shattering half of it into a webwork of cracks. All at once, bricks and stones and pieces of broken bottles were whistling overhead, raining down on the helicopter as the mob, with an animal growl, surged forward.

"Shoot!" Mrs. Van Gelder screamed. "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Kill the dirty sons of bitches!"

As dozens of wild-eyed howling streeties shambled like killer apes towards the helicopter, Mary didn't have to be told what to do. Her finger tightened on the trigger, sending a short loud burst



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of gunfire right into the mob. Streeties shrieked and fell. The mob abruptly turned tail and began to flee in all directions like the denizens of an anthill fleeing from the sudden shock of a boot-heel.

But Mary hardly noticed any of this. For the sudden screaming burst of machine gun fire had passed not three feet from the pilot's head, scaring him out of his socks. He threw up his hands in panic, and in so doing, let go of the leash.

The panicked cocker spaniel, yelping and barking, went tear-assing across the crater right on the heels of the fleeing streeties.

Gonzo, stuck in the rear of the crowd of streeties by the press of bodies, was frozen for a moment by the sound of machine gun fire and screams of agony, long enough to be knocked on his ass by some bonzo when the mob turned to flee.

Scrabbling to his feet in terror, he saw a black furry shape dashing right by his arm, barking and whining. The dog! What luck! Forty pounds of meat for the monster, muchacho!

Before his fuddled brain even had time to form these simple thoughts, his street smart instincts had acted. With lightning speed and with every ounce of strength in his scrawny arm, he raised up his fist and brought it down on the head of the cocker spaniel.

Before the pole-axed dog could even hit the ground, he snatched it up by the tail, stuffed it head-first into his street bag, shouldered the sack, and was up and running like a son of a bitch.

"My God, he's got Dearie!" Mrs. Van Gelder screamed. "Stop him! Stop him!"

But even as Mary fired, the plushie tushie bitch yanked at her arm, and the burst did nothing more than send chips of stone flying into the air not ten yards from the helicopter. "Don't shoot, you imbecile, you could hit Dearie!"

Then Gloria Van Gelder's pale powdered puss was inches from her own, as livid and drooling with rage as any Mary had seen in her previous incarnation as a streetie.

"You go out there, you incompetent cow, and you bring back my Dearie alive, or you don't bother to come back at all!" she snarled in a hysterical voice backed with cold steel. "I'll have you digging rocks in the South Bronx till you drop! I'll lobe you myself! I'll have you ground up into kibble! And don't you think I can't do it, you wretched scum."

Mary didn't. Not for a moment did she doubt that with a wave



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of her fat-fingered hand, this chocha could and would destroy everything she had become since she clawed her way off the street. But for one brief moment, she did toy with the delicious notion of jamming the muzzle of her Uzi right down this lousy plushie tushie's throat and emptying an entire magazine directly into her stinking guts. . . .

Then she was off and running.

High on the fly with swag in his bag, Gonzo's street smarts put brains in his feet. The mob was fleeing south on Third, the street was hot on the trot as the bird spread the word, and he knew he didn't have much chance of keeping forty pounds of dog in his bag on a streetie main drag. He needed to fade from this scene like a submarine, and so he turned east on the first side street.

His luck held. No one else had made this turn: There was nothing on this narrow street but burned out building shells mounded with ancient garbage. Somewhere in these ruins there must be something sharp enough to cut up the mutt into meat, and if he could score a match somewhere . . .

But as he paused for a moment to catch his breath and check out his chances, he heard the sound of running feet. Turning, he was brought right down to the ground, clown, by the sight of the zonie from the helicop halfway up the street behind him, running hard, closing fast, and waving that goddamn machine gun chop.

"Son-of-a-mother-jumping-puta-goddamn-zonie-bitch!" he screamed in outrage as he made his feet do their stuff. But with forty pounds of dog on his back, he wasn't going to outrun no zonie for long. And ditching the dogmeat to save his own was not even a thought that crossed his mind. She was starting to gain on him as he turned the corner and came out onto Lexington. Bad luck, boy, muy malo!

And then good.

He had come out onto the next main drag not a block from a subway stop! And for the first time in his life, he had a token in his jock!

The shock of such an incredible roll of good fortune—a token, the dog, now a subway stop—was like a cold whack in the chops that brought Gonzo's street smarts rushing back.

Against all reasonable animal instincts, knowing that his pursuer would now be closing even faster, he forced himself to slow to a trot, and then to a mere brisky saunter as he entered the sphere of attention of the muni cop guarding the entrance against the more obvious chop-artists, screamers, and psychoscum. Be



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cool, don't be a fool, he told himself, flashing his token for the indifferent benefit of the bored muni as he descended the stairs to the subway station.

Mary turned the corner onto Lexington just in time to catch a glimpse of the top of a heavily-laden street bag disappearing down the stairs of the subway entrance up the block right under the stupid eyes of some lobed-out muni. Or so she thought. At this distance, it was hard to tell one swag bag from another, and for a few moments she could still delude herself that maybe she wasn't going to have to chase the damn dog-snatcher through the subway, where her chances of catching him were slim to none.

But the mother was nowhere else in sight as she trotted up to the muni, waving her Uzi as a badge of zoniehood to cut any crap, and her brief interrogation of the cop put the seal on it.

"Skinny pimply geek with a dog in his bag?"

"Plenty of skin and bones with pimples, ain't seen no *dog* in three years, whaddaya think this is, Madison and 60?"

"What just went down the stairs. Pimples? Heavy bag?"

"Yeah, regular pimple-puss. Big bag of swag, now thatya mention it, musta had fifty pounds of crap in there. Flashing a token too."

*Oh no!* The odds against any streetie having a token were ten to one against. The odds against the one streetie that snatched the damn dog having one were forget it. Mary had hoped that if the bonzo *had* ducked into the subway entrance, he had simply panicked, wouldn't get past the barrier, she'd be able to corner him like a nice fat trapped rat. But if the mother got past the barrier and into the Subterranio itself—

"Mierda!" she snarled, and dashed down the stairs.

One bit of luck was that this was a small local station—this entrance only opened onto the uptown local platform. At the bottom of the stairs was the entrance barrier and a small one-man token fortress. The barrier was the usual floor-to-ceiling wall of rusting, bullet-pocked three-inch armor plate. The fortress was a seven-by-seven-by-seven cube of the same, with a rotating tv camera enclosed in bullet-proof glass on top, a single money-and-token slot at shoulder level and the muzzle of a fifty-caliber machine gun poking out just below it. One of the three revolving turnstile doors in the barrier was just turning shut behind someone. No one in sight, and no place here to hide.

Mary wasted no time interrogating the token clerk, seeing as how her eardrums and the soles of her feet were picking up the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vibes of a train approaching distantly down the tunnel. She stuck a token in the turnstile slot, and with a belt from her shoulders, forced the rusty stile barrier to turn, valving her onto the subway platform.

The uptown platform was dim, gray-green, filthy, stinking, and pretty deserted. A muni armed with an M-16 lounged under one of the still-working lights close by the barrier. Four townies in subway masks stuck close by him staring across the tracks at the downtown platform. Up the platform towards the uptown end, a female streetie squatted. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Mary could see the lights of a train approaching the platform from downtown. That end of the platform lay in darkness, all the lights there having long since ceased to function. Odds on, her quarry was down there somewhere. . . .

She turned to interrogate the muni. "Did you see where—"

At that inopportune moment, with a roar, a squeal, and a gut-wrenching clatter, the train barrelled into the station—

"—Wha—?"

"—Did you see—"

"—Huh—?"

—Hiss! Crunch! Squeal! Clang! The train came to a juddering halt and half the car doors slid open.

"I SAID DID YOU SEE A BONZO WITH A HEAVY STREET BAG?"

"Ya gotta scream in my face like that?" the muni snarled intelligibly in the momentary silence.

The masked townies (Mickey Mouse, Horseface, Clown, Frankenstein) dashed into the nearest car. The streetie daintily wiped her butt with the hem of her robe.

"I said, did you—"

Way at the downtown end, a figure carrying a heavy bag and glancing in Mary's direction dashed out of the darkness into a subway car. The doors started to close—

"Crap!" Mary snarled, dashing for the nearest door, and managing to wedge it just enough ajar with the butt of her Uzi to snake inside.

Clunk! Hiss! Whirr! Jolt! The train began to pull out of the station.

Safe for the moment, Gonzo had time to think, and once he began to think, he couldn't figure this crazy zonie. Why had she chased him this far? Natch, forty pounds of dogmeat would be a neat snatch even for a zonie, she must have the drool for the pero. But then why hadn't she chopped at him with her piece; she sure



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hadn't been slow with the blow back at the helicop. Loco in the coco, jamoco!

Gonzo dashed up the subway car to check out the doors at the uptown end. Days of yore, these had opened to connect the cars, but they had been long since welded shut for security isolation. Once he saw that the weld still held, that the zonie couldn't car-hop in here after him, he dropped down on one of the blue-green plastic benches that ran the length of the subway car to catch his breath and suss the scene.

There were only about a dozen people in this car, and they were all townies hiding behind their subway masks, staring into space trying to pretend that no one else existed in the hope that no one would notice *they* existed. No streeties to get any droolies for what might be in his bag. Good thing too, because now he could see that the bottom of the bag was oozing blood. Anyone with street smarts knew that fresh blood meant raw meat, skeet. Only these townies, lobed-out for the duration behind their dumb masks with goo jammed up their ears, too gutless to even let their faces hang out naked in the Subterranio, would make like they couldn't see he had mucho muncho in his poncho.

Hanging by one hand from a subway handle and dangling her chop from the other, Mary was given a wide zone all to herself by the masked townies, who sucked themselves even deeper into subway trance at the sight of this armed crazy, as she pondered the tactical situation. There were five cars between her and the bonzo and most if not all of the doors between would be welded shut. So you could say that she had him cornered in the extreme downtown sardine can. All she had to do was get to him.

Which, she realized, she could do at 34th Street, the next station. Timing and speed, that was her need. When the train stopped and the doors opened, she would dash out, run down the platform, and with luck get into the car where he was holed up before they closed again. The trick was the timing—she had to make sure that he didn't slip out as she was slipping in. If he did, she'd be stuck in the train while he stood on the platform waving bye-bye and then her only chance would be to risk a head-shot on the fly-by and hope she didn't hit Dearie in the bargain.

On the other hand, if she were willing to risk shooting at all . . .

Not without a certain strain of the brain, Gonzo tried to think like a zonie. What was *her* next move along this groove?

Hippity-hop, car-to-car at the next stop, that's what *he'd* do if



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he were a zonie cop. And if he could hop out just as the doors were closing and she was hopping in . . . It'd be fun, son, she'd be off to the next station in the can, man, and he'd be standing there waving adios to the heat still holding the meat!

Mary leaned against the doors as the train clanked and squealed into the next station, primed to move the moment they opened. Grind! Squeal! Clank! Thud! Zip!

The doors opened. Or rather one of them did, the other jamming. Mary snaked through, elbowing aside a fat townie in a devil mask who was trying to get in, made up one car, slipped on some crap, stumbled into two more townies, swept them out of the way snarling, made another car length, saw the bonzo peering out of a door three cars ahead, made another car length—

—The train doors started to close—

—She made for the nearest one, saw her prey starting to dash out of the train onto the platform as she ducked inside—

And fired a long wild burst along the length of the intervening cars, scattering screaming townies, pinning him inside as the doors slid shut and the train left the station.

The townies caught in the car with this maniac and her smoking gun sat motionless behind their silly subway masks, cringing a bit as she glared at them while fitting in a fresh clip, but otherwise earnestly ignoring everything that happened in a punctilious display of standard straphanger manners. Only a couple of slimy streeties at the far end of the car were babbling and moaning.

"Snap your yaps, or I'll ice your dice, lice!" Mary screamed at them. "I'll drop that bop on the next goddamn stop!"

Gonzo knew he had to move now, like pow! or on the next pass, his ass was grass. The townies in the car were pissing and moaning, yet at the same time trying to pretend nothing had happened as they oozed as unobtrusively as possible towards the downtown end, away from the monster.

"Son-of-a-bitch-bastard-puta-mother!" he screamed at them as one switch in his brain clicked off, and another clicked on, and he grabbed a geek in a Mickey Mouse mask, who had been too slow in moving, by the throat.

"Snap your yap, jap!" he snarled as the townie gurgled and gargled. Street smarts took over, and, using the townie's head like a hammer, he began battering at the nearest window.

Clang! Screech! Thud! The train pulled into the next station.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mary squeezed through the half-opened doors, ran down the platform, shoving townies out of the way with the muzzle of her Uzi, and made it into the extreme downtown car.

Two rows of townies huddled towards the end of the car spaced and shaking behind their subway masks. Except for a geek in a Mickey Mouse mask who lay on the bench towards the middle of the car in a smear of blood, beneath a window whose glass had been battered out to form a jagged exit.

The doors slid shut. Gingerly, Mary stuck her head through the shard-guarded windowframe.

The train began to move.

Peering downtown as the train began to move uptown, she saw a figure carrying a heavy street bag on its shoulder tear-assing down the subway tunnel.

"Son-of-a-bitch-puta-mother-bastard!" she screamed, firing a wild burst after him without thinking. The bullets echoed and pinged harmlessly off the concrete walls, and then the sound was lost in the ear-killing noise of the subway train getting up to speed.

Now that he was home free all, Gonzo allowed himself the luxury of feeling his fatigue. Scattered blue lights bathed the subway tunnel in a dim pale glow. A line of pylons separated the uptown from the downtown tracks. Man-sized alcoves were incised into the tunnel wall at regular intervals for the benefit of track crews avoiding passing trains. Gonzo huddled in one of these. His feet were meat, his back was beat, and he really wanted a cool 24 on his seat.

But while he was pretty sure he had given the zonie the slip, he knew he wasn't quite finished with this run, son. Not until he had the dog butchered, dressed out, and cooked. For one thing, a forty pound mutt was only maybe thirty for the gut, and after having his ass chased all over already, he didn't feature carrying the useless extra freight. For another, raw dogmeat would start to stink in a day or two.

With all the old metal junk down here, finding something to use as a knife wouldn't exactly be worth your life, but he couldn't cook his snatch without a match, and just sitting down in the open and barbecuing a whole dog would draw every streetie within range like birds to a turd.

Much as he disliked the notion, he had to admit that a few pounds of the dog could buy him everything he needed, if he could



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

find a solo lobo with a secret hooch where he could poach the pooch. Some dumb suck too weak to try and push his luck.

Come to think of it, a *chick* would sure do the trick. . . .

Running on old street smart reflexes without being dumb enough to take time to think, Mary got off the uptown train, fought her way through the rush crush in this town under the ground, slipped into a downtown just pulling out, rode it two stops, and got off again. Couldn't have taken more than five minutes.

Which meant that the bonzo who she had last seen running downtown through the tunnel had to be uptown from her now and heading her way down the uptown tunnel.

Fortunately for her, most of the lights at the uptown end of the downtown platform were long since gone, but there was still one burning at the uptown end of the platform across the tracks. Which meant that if she lay prone on the end of the platform, she would be invisible to anyone emerging from the tunnel, whereas *he* would become a nicely silhouetted target at point-blank range. Which meant that she should be able to drop him with a good tight head-shot without much risk of hitting the dog.

But once she took up this position, lying out of sight in the filth and shadows, she had nothing to do but listen and think and smell the stink.

Like most townies without plushie tushie bread, Mary was constrained to ride the subway back and forth between work and her room. Although she felt a certain contempt for herself for doing it, like most townies, she wore earplugs against the noise, and a subway mask between her private inner world and the collective bummer of the subway and her fellow straphangers. This was usually enough to space her into the traditional subway riding trance, which hypnotic state was usually enough to allow her to push full awareness of the olfactory component of her surroundings below the level of conscious awareness.

But now, unmasked, unplugged, lying right in the down and dirty, and forced by the pragmatics of the situation into full sensory alert, she really *smelled* the subway for the first time in either this or her previous life.

It stank. P.U. B.O. L.A.M.F. Like rank.

It stank of generations of piss and sweat and crap. It stank of the collective body odor of the tens of thousands of scum lower than streeties who actually *lived* down here. It stank of old broiled rat and garbage-fire smoke. It stank of the tension, suppressed fear, and sour despair of the millions of townies who found them-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

selves processed through it twice a day. Once you let the smell penetrate your awareness, it permeated your whole being, it let you know that your *own* body odor was another part of the ghastly whole. It was a stink that made Mary think, and what she thought about was her own state of sweaty despair.

Dearie, the goddamn stupid mutt, might very well already be dead. She had seen the dog bashed on the head, hadn't she, and the sucker had really been brained. Come to think of it, she had never seen a struggling sign of life in the street bag, and had heard not a bark or whine of protest from the normally noisy creature throughout the whole chase.

And if the dog hadn't been dead when the bonzo had stuffed it in the bag, there was a good chance that he was killing it right now. Man, if *she* were the streetie with a dog in *her* bag, *she'd* sure as hell make sure the mother was dead as soon as possible. Even if he thought she had given up, he'd know that a bark or a yelp would attract attention, and any such attention you drew down *here* would mean nothing but trouble of the worst possible kind. . . .

Out of the corner of her eye, she clocked the comings and goings on the subway platform. The evening rush was in full swing. Train after train roared by scant feet from where she lay, rattling her brain. Masked townies zipped in and out through the crush trying hard not to see each other or anything else.

This not being one of the main station complexes, what they were really trying to avoid seeing was little in evidence—the permanent floating population of streeties, of things lower than streeties, that lived, or at any rate existed, down here full time, the Subway Scum that never saw the light of day.

Even in the worst times of her dimly-remembered streetie days, Maria had never been dumb or desperate enough to spend the hours between 9 P.M. and 7 A.M. in the subway, not even when the streets above were filled with slimy slushed snow and the temperature at night hit ten below. When the subways shut down at 9, *all* the lights went out, and what hid in the tunnels and crannies during the subway "day" slithered out to claim a night blacker than a plushie tushie's heart. And the word from the bird was that anything that moved was meat.

You could get a hint of what that meant if you glimpsed out of the corner of your eye at what lurked around the darker edges of the major stations like Times Square or Grand Central during the day. Babblers and screamers. Lumps of filthy flesh sleeping



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under mounds of newspapers. Bits and pieces of bone it didn't pay to look too closely at piled around last night's cookfires.

Even with plenty of ammo for the Uzi, Mary didn't have the dumb guts to risk being caught down here when the lights went out. She'd give up first, she'd take her chances with Mrs. Gloria Van Gelder, she'd go back to the streets, she'd . . .

Oh no!

Oh *yes!*

Mary snapped out of the hypnogogic reverie into which, in retrospect, she realized she had fallen. How long had she lain here? How many trains had gone by? She'd lost track. She'd lost count, or never taken it. But she'd certainly been lurking here more than long enough for the bonzo with the dog to come slinking up the tunnel.

If he was going to.

Crap, it figured! She'd been a zonie too long. She'd lost her street smarts, she'd forgotten how to think like truely desperate prey. If *she* were the streetie with a dog in her poke, if she had been chased and nearly nailed by a zonie with an Uzi, what would she do? She'd hole up in that tunnel between stations and stay out of sight until the lights went out, that's what she'd do! Figuring correctly that no townie, not even a heeled zonie, would want her ass bad enough to risk her own in the subway after 9. Then, and only then, would she sneak up the tunnel towards the nearest station, and, unless her luck was bad, escape to the street with the meat.

Face it Maria, that suck isn't going to come walking down these tracks while the lights are on. And even if you're crazy enough to wait here till they go out, which you are not, you won't even be able to see well enough to get a clean head-shot from five feet out.

You've been handing yourself a con, mon, she knew. Only two ways to go, mojo—into that tunnel after the suck before the lights go out, or hang it up and let the mother keep the pup, in which case your meat will be back on the street.

Mary got to her feet, pretending for a moment that she was making up her mind, that the possibility of true choice really existed. A train came roaring into the station not three feet from her nose. The rush was waning now, only about a dozen townies got on, and fewer got off. She had no more time to play games with her mind. It was now or never.

So when the train left the station, she slipped over the platform lip and onto the downtown tracks. Keeping close to the tunnel



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wall and away from the electrified third rail, she went trotting off uptown through the tunnel, following the dim line of blue bulbs ever deeper into the semi-darkness, eyes alert for any movement up ahead, ears pricked to anticipate the rumble of trains approaching from the rear, nerves scraping rawer and rawer with the ever-building tension. . . .

Gonzo didn't feature this, he didn't like the look of it at all. He'd been slowly and ever so carefully making his way downtown through the tunnel, following the trail of blue bulbs, ducking into an inspection alcove every time a train began to approach, long before he became visible in the oncoming lights. Starting and freezing every time he heard a rat scuttle or the unfathomable clank of distant machinery. Now he was approaching a totally dark section of the tunnel where all the lights were out, every last one of them, downtown and up, for as far ahead as his eyes could see.

As he squinted into the dark trying unsuccessfully to penetrate the ominous gloom, something seemed unnatural about the situation, you didn't expect things to be working down here very well, but . . .

Then he felt the pressure wave of an oncoming train moving uptown towards him from behind the blackness. He ducked into an alcove, and a minute or two later, the onrushing headlights of the train lit up the dark section of tunnel for a few moments as it came around a bend into visibility.

In those few moments, Gonzo saw that the dead bulbs up ahead hadn't merely been burned out and never replaced. Every last one of them on both the uptown and downtown sides of the tunnel had been smashed. And for a flash Gonzo saw, or thought he saw, or tried to convince himself he didn't see, a big, hairy, raggy-baggy shape shamble quickly across the tracks like a jungle ape. Clutching something that seemed to gleam like a well-cleaned blade . . .

Mary plastered herself to the tunnel wall as the train went by. When it had passed, she looked uptown with a sinking feeling in her guts.

The next whole section of the tunnel was dark. Dead black dark. So dark that she reflexively glanced behind her at the receding row of dim lights just to make sure that they were still on, that she hadn't lost track of time and been caught down here after nine. When she assured herself that the lights behind her were



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still feebly burning, a part of her, a big part of her, wanted to turn tail and follow them home rather than venture further into the dark and deadly.

But she knew that if she followed those lights now, if she left this damn place without the goddamn dog, there wouldn't *be* any home to return to—no job, therefore no money, therefore no next month's payment on her room, therefore no room, therefore her ass would be back on the street.

Son of a chicken bitch! she told herself. You've got your chop, girl! Got your zonie moves, you mean jungle-mother! And if I was that gonzo sucker, I'd be right there in the dark lurking, figuring this poor little muchacha would chicken out and start twitching and jerking. Go get that suck, with any luck, he's in there just waiting for mama!

Thus pumping herself up, Mary slowly began walking uptown again, into the darkened section of tunnel, up on the balls of her feet, her finger on the trigger, holding the Uzi before her like a spear.

Within twenty yards or so, the tunnel took a bend, and when she had rounded it, she was walking through total blackness. Her nerves started screaming in protest, but she couldn't let herself stop now. Even though every fall of her feet sounded to her like an elephant crunching along on broken glass. Even though she froze every few feet at little sounds, real or imagined.

The darkness seemed to go on forever in space and in time. Phantom shapes were flickering across the insides of her blinded eyes, glowing yellow eyes, gleaming mouths full of razor-sharp teeth, horribly flapping wings of night, and the squealing and scraping of rats and bats and things that—

—"*Gargha! Eeegah!*"

Something screaming, gibbering, puke-stinking foul, strong and heavy, suddenly smashed into her in the darkness, mewling and slavering and slamming her up against a tunnel pylon! Teeth sank into her shoulder sending a lightning bolt of pain down her arm, claws raked her face, the Uzi went flying into the darkness—

—Then there was a quick flash of blue light that engraved an awful after-image on her retinas as it faded as fast as it had come—

—Muzzle first, the machine pistol had hit the third rail, fusing and sizzling in a shower of electric blue sparks that revealed—

—A huge hulking male thing, all muscles, rotten rags, crap-matted hair and beard, pinning her to the pylon with its body, lifting a face that was all hair and red eyes and brown jagged



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teeth dripping with her own blood, so close to her nose that she gagged on the fetid stench of its horrid breath as the after-image faded to black.

"Puta-mother!" she screamed in the dark, and, bracing her back against the pylon, brought her knee up with desperate strength at where she calculated its crotch would be.

"Eeeeee!" A shrill burbling scream and something soft bruising against her kneecap. Claws at her eyes. Something hard hit her gut, knocking the wind out of her. Her knees started to fold and she began to fall. . . .

But not before she brought down the heel of her right hand where she hoped a neck would be and felt a satisfying resistance against it as she fell forward into a stunning jolt of head on head.

Something stabbed feebly at her chest. Then she was down on the dirt with a heavy weight atop her drooling and grunting and clawing at her face.

And the sound of a train clattering toward her from around the bend in the tunnel.

Somehow, she got her feet up, wedged in between her stomach and the creature. She could feel the pressure-wave of the approaching train now, see a light rushing towards her, eclipsed by the dark bulk pressing down on her body.

"Eee-YAH!" she shouted, putting all her remaining strength into a double-legged kick, flipping the thing up off her, back-first into the side of the train rushing past them at high speed.

The body bounced off the moving train like a basketball off a backboard and smashed into her as she tried to rise, knocking her over backwards—

—there was a sudden sharp pain at the back of her head and then her own lights went out.

Gonzo had no idea how long he had been frozen there, squeezing as deep into the alcove as possible, trying to become invisible.

He had seen a thing much too big for him want to tussle shamble across the tracks. He had heard screams and grunts and the sounds of bovver. Then an electric blue flash and two struggling figures as something hit the third rail. Then more screams and fight sounds. Then the lights of an approaching train outlining two nasty mothers rolling around on the tracks. Then nothing but darkness and silence up ahead for a long, long time.

No logician he, but this kind of calculation his street smarts could handle: he had seen something too big to mess with, that something had gotten into it with something else, therefore



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whichever one of them had come out on top, *he* did not feature facing it, in the dark or in the light.

No way he was going to go ahead towards whatever lurked in the dark. And unless the two of them had offed each other or the train had gotten them both, a percentage you had to be loco in the coco to play, *something* muy fuerte *was* up ahead of him in the dark, and might be silently creeping up the tunnel towards him right now.

So if he turned tail and fled uptown, he might be spotted by the whatever, a little guy with a big bag outlined by the tunnel lights before him. Yeah, *he'd* be visible, and whatever was down there would be watching him out of the impenetrable dark.

So the scam, Sam, was to hold the line. When the whole subway went dark, the percentage would be his—he knew there was something down there, but *it* didn't know about him. He hoped. When neither of them could see, if he could move without tipping a sound, he could slink uptown home free.

Dashing down the snowy street five steps ahead of two dudes with open flies. She grabbed the rat by its tail and bashed its brains out against the wall. Grabbing up a brick from the pile of rubble, she smacked him across the chops with it. The dog ran yelping and screaming. The john, grunting and swearing. Gobbets of pigeon slid down her gullet. A throb of pain somewhere, and a deeper, duller thud of pain somewhere else.

Maria didn't really know when she had come to. Shoulder, right. Head, right. Fragments of dream-images whirling behind her eyes at some point became fragments of fear images whirling in the dark. She had a head and shoulder somewhere, and they hurt like a son of a bitch. Body, right. There was a body laying on some hard rocks or something, didn't feel good. Her body. She had a body. It was laying in a twisted heap with a bonging header and a sharp pain in its right shoulder. *She* was laying on the ground with a pain in her shoulder and another in her head. She was waking up, or maybe she had been awake for a while without really knowing it. Open the eyes.

Nada. Big black nothing. Panic. What the—

Memories came flooding back. The dark section of tunnel. A fight. The train. A hit on the head. Then nothing. Until now.

She was Maria. No, she was a zonie named . . . Reflexively, she reached for the reassurance of her Uzi. It wasn't there. Then she remembered the gun hitting the third rail, and it all came back to her, and she knew where she was and what had happened.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her Uzi was done for. She had kicked that filthy puta-mother right into a train, and then the body must have bounced into her, bashing her head against something which must have knocked her out. She didn't have any way of knowing how long she had been out cold in hours and minutes, but that didn't matter the way time was measured down here. Because what counted, *all* that counted, was that it was after nine in the subway, all the lights were out, and her chop would be useless even if she stumbled on it in the dark.

The panic returned, an informed, logical panic this time, and all the worse for its clarity. She couldn't see anything. She didn't know which way was uptown or downtown and there was no way to figure it out. She caught herself freaking before she realized that that didn't matter now. Because she was in deep enough shit without worrying about any goddamn dog anymore. And whichever way she went, she'd come to a station.

She took a deep breath, gathering her wits. Find the tunnel wall. Once she did that, she'd have the whole width of a set of subway tracks between her and the third rail. To be on the safe side, better crawl.

So instead of rising, she began crawling blindly through the muck and filth of the tunnel floor. She hadn't gone more than a few yards before her outstretched fingers recoiled from something warm and soft and sticky. Reflexively withdrawing, she reflexively stifled a reflexive scream. Nothing moved. The moment of panic passed as she realized this must be the corpse of her attacker. Whom she had bounced off a fast-moving train, and who therefore must be very, very dead.

She relaxed. She almost felt good. She had won. She had killed this great big crazy mother. And he had been armed with a knife.

A knife.

Efficiently, professionally, she ran her fingers all over the corpse until she found it, realizing, but not really caring, that the sticky wet stuff she was getting all over herself was blood. Then she touched something hard and metallic. Gingerly, she ran her fingertips along it until she touched rags. A rag-wrapped handle. She had it. She snatched it up. She had a knife. It might not be an Uzi, but at least it was a weapon.

It felt so much better to be heeled. Maria felt an almost sensual calm passing from the handle of the knife, down her arm, into her body, and thence to her brain, which slowly assumed a predator's icy calm. Having a weapon again made it possible to think clearly.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For one thing, it was stupid to be crawling around in the muck worrying about touching the third rail; it was after nine, *all* the electricity was off. She scrambled to her feet as soundlessly as possible, for silence was still golden down here in the dangerous dark. She reached down and took off her shoes, the better to simulate a predator padding through the jungle of the night.

Cunningly, methodically, she began to pad in ever-widening spiralling circles, until, inevitably, the outstretched fingers of her left hand touched the tunnel wall. Choosing an arbitrary direction, she pressed her body up against the concrete.

Feeling along the wall with her left hand, holding the knife cocked for action in her right, breathing in short, silent little sips, placing one foot softly and carefully in front of the other, she began creeping up the tunnel.

Gonzo had lost his nerve, and he was just on the verge of admitting it to himself. Fact was, as long as he stayed here frozen to the tunnel wall in the soundless dark, he was safe. Nothing could see him, and as long as he didn't move, nothing could hear him either. Whereas the moment he moved, anything that was waiting in the dark, anything that even now could be inches from his face could—

—a soft, warm, sweaty palm brushed against his cheek—

—He started, jumped, screamed, felt something whistle past his throat, wet his pants, and—

"I've got a knife, twitch and you croak, bloke!" Maria hissed in the dark, listening for something to slash at.

Silence. Darkness. The sound of ragged breathing over to the right, or her imagination? A stand-off. She had the knife, but both of them were blind. A waiting game. The first one to make a sound would reveal their position, and then . . .

Slowly, ever so slowly in the silent dark, Gonzo's street smarts began to overcome his fear. A voice. He had heard a *chick's* voice. Did she really have a knife? Or was all that a scam, man? Or was she as scared crapless as he was? Or *more* afraid? *He* knew that what he was facing was only a muchacha with or without a blade, whereas *she* didn't know *what* he was. . . .

A chick . . . Hadn't he been planning to do a trick with a chick?

He made his voice as deep and menacing as he could, stepping back and aside as he spoke so she couldn't slash at the sound. "Deal, muchacha! Got a sweet deal for you."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Silence. Darkness. Nada.

"Come on, girl, give it a whirl," Gonzo said irritably now.

More silence. Then, over to the left, and maybe moving, a hesitant, harsh female voice. "What's the word, turd?"

Ah, got her talking now. If I can only . . .

"Got a match, snatch?"

"What if I do?"

"Take a peek, freak."

"What's your scam, Sam?"

"*Meat's* the treat, skeet!" Gonzo said seductively. "I got it, you cook it. Take a look, I won't bite."

Meat? *Dogmeat?* Maria could hear her heart pounding in the dark. Could it be? Could this be the bonzo who pinched the dog? Standing right there in front of her knife offering his life?

She had to. She had it made, she had the blade, and if she saw it *was* the suck, he was fresh out of luck.

Trembling, she fished around in a pocket with her left hand and extracted a book of paper matches. Still clutching the knife handle, she used both hands to get it open, tore off a match. Holding the matchbook in her left hand, the knife and the match in her right, she struck it and—

—the sudden light dazzled her—

—something leaped and battered at her hands—

—the match guttered back into darkness—

—the knife was gone—

Now that he had copped the blade, Gonzo had it made. He could leave her in the dark and make a run . . . or he could really have some fun. And the snatch probably had another match. . . .

"Hey, you got more fire, muchacha?" he said.

Nada. She was playing it cool, she was nobody's fool.

"Meat's the treat, skeet, like I say. I got a whole *dog* in my bag! Come on, what do you say, a big piece of my meat for a little piece of yours."

Ice-cold, red-hot, Maria did a slow burn in the dark, cursing her own stupidity, but still praising her luck at finding the suck. The puta-mother she was after! Her ticket back to the Zone! But the mother had her knife, and after he had her bod, it would probably be her life.

*After* he had her bod, she realized with slow deliberation. Yeah, she'd be safe until he'd done his fun. And she'd handled the big



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

geek who'd had the knife in the first place, hadn't she? And this was a scrawny little crud, she had her zonie moves, and when he started to groove . . .

*I* know who *he* is, but he doesn't know what *I* am, she realized. Better play it dumb and hook the scum.

"Dog . . ?" she said in a little girl voice. "You gotta *dog?"*

"We got a deal, girl?"

"But . . . but how do I know you won't just feed me the blade?"

"Dead gash ain't no stash."

Maria put all the dumb little chocha stupidity she could into her voice. "Okay, man, I take a chance. . . ."

"Gotta hooch where we can cook the pooch?"

Mother, the dumb geek thought she was Subway Scum! Her confidence began to grow; that might be another angle she could use. "42nd Street," she said, realizing suddenly that if she had run into him, she must have been heading uptown. 42nd on the IRT East meant Grand Central, a whole underground town, clown, where I can find someplace safe to grass your ass.

"No quick moves," said a voice coming towards her. "Don't freak." Then she felt an arm snake around her back and a sharp little prick between her shoulder-blades. "No smart stuff, muff," he said beside her ear. And then they started walking uptown through the dark tunnel together, just like lovey-doves.

Gonzo had *never* spent a night in the Subterranio, let alone with anything in his bag worth a tussle to Subway Scum muscle, so his nerves began to twitch when he saw the smoky red glow of fires up ahead. Still, he figured he had an edge, or so he told himself. Primero, he had the knife, and for another, he had this chick as back-up, and this snatch had managed to come out on top in a one-on-one with that big and bad back there. This was *Subway Scum* gash, muchacho, she knew how the land lay, she knew what games to play.

But he'd better not pop that he was as cherry down here as some dumb muni cop. "Look, we stick together, right?" he said as they approached the flickering, smoldering, dull red light outlining the mouth of the tunnel. "We back each other up?"

"That's the scam, Sam. For tonight, you're my man."

"Okay, then no tricks, chick," he said, removing the point of the knife from the pit of her back, and letting it dangle from his hand in plain dangerous sight. "Just remember, I've still got the blade."

As they emerged from the cover of the tunnel and into the 42nd



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Street station, Gonzo could see that there were dozens of fires burning in the station above. In the smoky smelly light, he got his first real look at his lady of the night. Subway Scum for sure, mon! She was wearing something that might once have been yellow but was now a raggy bag smeared with blood, and crap, and ashy grey mung. Her tough-looking face was more of the same—scratched, and bruised, and caked with crud and old blood.

She was one mean-looking mama, and that gave him cojones. They were a bad-looking combo, Mr. & Mrs. Kick-Your-Ass, with a bag and a knife, screw with us, and it's worth your life!

Maria had seen the Grand Central subway station often enough by day—it was the biggest there was, one of the main hubs of the whole system, an underground town with newsstands and veggie stalls, rag stores and smoke stands, rat peddlers and knife shops, porn racks and meat racks. Dozens of stalls and stands and stores and peddlers, hundreds of thousands of potential customers passing through, and the city taking its cut from all the action, meaning that there was always a small army of munis conspicuously in evidence to keep things cool.

But now, as they crawled up off the tracks onto the platform, it was a different world. All the floating peddlers were long since gone and all the stands and stalls and stores were sealed with armor-plate shutters that looked about three feet thick. Not a cop to be found, natch, and of course not a single electric light or townie in a subway mask.

But there sure was light and sound and plenty of raw meat around!

There were two platforms in this part of the station dividing four sets of tracks, and there were dozens of little fires burning on them where little solitary groups of shadowy figures hunched, rocking back and forth like spastics, mumbling and gabbling, and roasting rats and other morsels of meat. The flickering intermittent firelight turned the whole station into an ominous, endless, fluttering, guttering, formless human bat-cave, an illusive, ever-changing maze of shadow and dull red light, smogged with a thin, rancid, eye-watering smoke that stank of rat and grease and melting plastic. Shadows, shapes, and human bat-things shambled and shuffled in the foul firelight, filled the air with chittering and mumbling and evil babble. It was truly the asshole of the universe, the nethermost pit of the Pig Apple.

"Come on, girl, let's get to your hooch!" her fellow traveler whispered nervously. She could hear the fear in his voice, smell



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his sour frightened sweat even through the gagging fog. Right, she remembered, this toilet bowl is supposed to be *my* turf!

"Stick close to me, mon, keep that blade ready, and we'll handle these geeks," she said with a certain contemptuous arrogance, pretending to herself that she was a zonie with a chop and he was her plushie tushie out for a streetside slummer. "Maybe you oughta give me the knife. I'm a bitch with a blade."

He just gave her a narrow sneer. "Move your ass, gash!" he snarled fearfully, waving the knife with one hand and shouldering his bag with the other.

"You're the man, Sam," Maria shrugged, snaking a protective arm around his waist and leading him off she knew not where.

At first, the bitch seemed to move like she really knew her stuff, weaving a wide twisting path across the platform, moving from shadow to shadow, keeping them lost in the gloom, giving what huddled around the fires plenty of room.

But as they wandered deeper and deeper into the station, the fires got further and further apart, the walls melted away into shadow, and she seemed to be leading him on a random path from light to light, from scene to ghastly scene, like a tour-guide through hell.

Over there in the corner, just two filthy paws, each holding a fat rat by the tail over a fire. Avoiding this, they practically stumbled over two raggy shapes grunting in the dark. Starting away from these creatures in random flight, they blundered into two bags of ghostly white flesh stuffing gray gobbets of meat into their slavering yawps.

Pale eyes glowed at them speculatively. The things started to move towards them, and instinctively, they ran off towards a dim red glow.

Only to plaster themselves into the shadows in terror at the scene outlined by the fire: two scrawny, naked, skeletal creatures carving up the corpse of an old woman with enormous rusty knives.

"Where the hell *is* it?" Gonzo hissed as they slunk off deeper into the darkness. "We can't—"

He was interrupted by a liquid gagging sound practically on top of him. He kicked out and heard something moan in the black and then they were running blindly through the darkness.

Another dim firelight-glow up ahead. Something slithered towards them out of the darkness on all fours, which she drove back with a kick in the chops.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where the hell is your hooch, bitch?" Gonzo snarled. "We can't last much longer out here!"

"Near here, man, don't freak now!" Maria said, not knowing what in hell she was talking about, but feeling a certain superior contempt through her terror, for him, and for the human slime that infested the deepest bowels of the city.

They emerged from the darkness into an area of the station lined with shuttered stalls and lit with four or five fires. There was no avoiding the light here, nor the attention of the denizens. Solitary Subway Scum and groups of two or three huddled around the fires cooking rats or bits and pieces of what might have been human flesh. Eyes turned greedily towards the big bulging bag as they threaded their way through this flotsam, mouths grunted empty threats. But a lot of knifewaving and snarling was enough to drive them back, even though they could have rushed the two of them in a mob and feasted on a whole dog. The plushie tushies who owned the world somehow knew how to organize other people to serve them. The zonies knew how to coordinate themselves into a force. The townies could at least get it together to work and survive. Even streeties could come together to form a mob.

But down here these turds couldn't even do that. They were animals who didn't even have enough left to come together to rush a streetie with swag in his bag. One against all, even with their filthy asses to the wall.

Still, sooner or later, their luck would run out. Or sooner or later, he would realize she didn't know squat. Where could she find someplace to serve as "her hooch?" Jeez, she'd been down here during the day thousands of times, and this area was starting to seem familiar. . . .

She was leading him away from the fires now, down the line of shuttered stalls towards what showed signs of turning into a cul-de-sac, petering out into flickering shadows cast by the diminishing firelight behind them—

"Meat! Eat!"

A tall, fat, naked thing covered with scabs and old scars suddenly appeared from nowhere right in their path! A matted black beard framing a slack mouth full of snaggle teeth, a dripping nose, two blood-shot eyes. Swinging a huge piece of two-by-four caked with accretions of old dried blood.

The slimy-chicken gonzo shrieked, fell backwards, and waved his knife impotently. The club-wielding creature just giggled and drooled, not impressed one bit. But, mesmerized by the knife, it



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hunched forward like a killer ape, shambled forward swinging the big bloody board, and went after him, ignoring Maria, who stepped to the side as it went by, and kicked it squarely in the groin. The creature screamed in pain and outrage, crumpled over, then began to turn towards her—

"Kill it! Kill it! Kill it with the knife, you lousy son of a bitch!" she screamed, as she ducked a clumsy swipe of the club and delivered another karate kick to the creature's crotch. The thing sank to its knees this time, and she smashed it across the back of the neck with the heel of her hand, kneeing it in the teeth in the same move.

Then, finally, her "man" worked up enough cojones to stab it in the back again and again and again.

"Thanks a lot, hero!" she said when the creature finally stopped moving. Jeez, what a—

"Come on, come on, come on," the bonzo babbled, snatching up the bag again. "Everything down here must've heard it! They're coming after us, bitch! Run! Run!"

Maria didn't hear a damned thing, and she didn't believe the scum down here was about to go chasing after the sounds of bovver either, but he was pushing and shoving at her in panic, and so they went trotting off deeper into the semi-darkness.

And quite suddenly she realized where she was and where she was heading and what should be only a few yards ahead.

This corridor connected with the shuttle line. And there was a toilet up here somewhere. All these big stations had crappers. But no one had dared to use them in her memory. They were so foul that no muni would take the patrol. And without a resident cop, no one was dumb enough to go in. With one door in and the same door out, the crappers were traps.

Or places to hide.

"Here we are, man," she said. "Be ready with that knife this time. I'm gonna light a match."

Gonzo sure didn't need her to tell him to be ready for trouble. She had led him back here into the deep dark, where all he could make out by the dim distant firelight was a rusted L-shaped barrier uselessly guarding a closed door from nonexistent eyes. If she were going to try any crap, it would be now, when she could feature that his eyes might be blinded for a moment by the sudden light of the match, hadn't he taught her that one himself—

She struck the match.

The tiny point of light blinded him for only a moment as he



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

squinted his eyes in anticipation of the shock. She made no dumb move. "Good suerte," she said instead, picking up a piece of brown cardboard lying in a pile of crap and lighting it to make a little torch. "Ready . . ?"

"You first," he said, waving the knife. "I'll be right behind you."

She snorted at him, and then, with a real sharp move, she kicked the door open and dashed inside, with Gonzo right behind.

In the dim light of the torch, he saw a big room flaking peeling green paint. Along one wall was a line of urinals, their bowls heaped with paper, and cracked bones. Opposite, a row of crapper stalls with the doors torn off and more piles of mung and bones filling the ancient toilet bowls. Huge mounds of paper, bones, cardboard, and amorphous grey crud were heaped everywhere on the floor where there wasn't a puddle of piss. The stink was incredible.

"Jeez, do you—"

Suddenly one of the mounds of garbage exploded in a shower of paper, bones, and crap. Up out of it came a screaming filthy, white-maned pallid something brandishing a heavy length of pipe.

They moved like parts of the same deadly machine. Gonzo dropped his bag, sidestepped under a wild flail of the pipe, while she managed to hold onto her torch while she caught the creature in the guts with a well-placed kick, and he leapt forward, plunging the knife deep into its chest as a bone-thrilling jolt went up his arm. As the torch started to gutter out and the thing went down, they both kicked and stomped, howling like animals together in the dark.

He gave the motionless body one final kick as a match flared into brilliance and snatched up the pipe while she was lighting a fire in one of the garbage-filled urinals.

They stood there in the smoky toilet, facing each other hot-eyed and panting over their kill. With a little snarl, she kicked the corpse over onto its back with a flip of her bare foot.

Revealing a filthy old chocha with long stringy white hair, and thick red blood pooling between her naked withered dugs.

"Come on, man," she hissed, grabbing the body by the heels and starting to drag it towards the door.

"What you doing, girl?"

"Drag it outside. Give anyone coming by good reason to think twice about coming in *here*."

Gonzo tucked the pipe under his knife arm, and together they



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dragged and kicked the stiff out of the toilet, blocking the opening of the metal barrier with a barricade of dead meat.

"Gimme the pipe!" she demanded when they were back behind the closed toilet door.

Gonzo just sneered at her.

"Hey, you still got the knife," she said, fingering the doorknob. "Slip the damn pipe in behind here, like a lock, man!"

"Comprend," Gonzo said, wedging the length of pipe behind the doorknob so that the door was barred.

When this was done, he saw her staring at him with hot hungry eyes that made his groin throb. Oh yeah, this muchacha could really move, this was gonna be a groove. . . .

"*Now* . . ." she breathed huskily. "I want it *now!*"

"Sure baby," Gonzo moaned back, moving towards her. "Why not right now . . ?"

She moved backwards as he came for her. "The *dog*, man!" she said. "Show me the dog *now!*"

Hunkered down in the light of the smoky garbage fire in the filthy stinking toilet deep down under the ground, sweaty, bloody, wounded, scabbed, tired, hungry, and aching, Maria was aware of none of these things. Her total attention was hot-wired to a narrow razor-sharp focus on the street bag as the bonzo reached in and dragged the dog out by the tail.

"Forty pounds of meat," he said proudly, leering at her in the flickering firelit cave like a mighty warrior home from the hunt.

Forty pounds of meat.

That was exactly what she saw.

Dearie's head was caked with sticky drying blood. The black fur of its body was matted with more of the same. The mouth lay agape, the swollen tongue lolling between its jaws.

Forty pounds of dogmeat.

Mrs. Gloria Van Gelder's cocker spaniel was dead.

Very, very dead.

As dead as the old woman outside the door. As dead as the creature with the two-by-four. As dead as the thing that had attacked her in the tunnel. As dead as her job as a zonie. As dead as Mary Smith, townie.

For now, Mary Smith *was* dead; Maria's escape from the streets years ago was only yesterday's fantastic dream. Her whole goddamn life as anything but Maria the streetie was dead and gone into nothing. Mary Smith was dead. She had died there back at



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the helicop the moment this puta-mother's fist had brained Dearie. Mary Smith was as dead as forty pounds of dogmeat.

As dead as this son of a bitch was going to be before the subway lights went on again.

Oh man, did she look groovy! No woman had ever looked at Gonzo like that before. Her eyes glowed with animal lust in the orange firelight. Her mouth opened slightly to display pearly glistening teeth. She hunched forward like a cat just waiting to lap him up like a saucer of cream.

Since no woman had ever looked at Gonzo like this before, Gonzo had never felt anything like this before. They had killed together, they had run together, they had survived together. What a bitchin' chocha she was! Ah, he thought with a sweet sighing ache, we're two of a kind, girl! He felt himself going all soft inside, as soft inside as he was getting hard outside. All at once, he was proud of the forty pounds of dogmeat that he had laid before her, it became a token of offering rather than payment for a piece. You can eat all you want, girl, he thought. Maybe I won't ice you afterward . . . maybe we can run together . . . maybe . . . maybe. . . .

If he could have comprehended the concept, Gonzo might have thought that he was in love.

"Wanna do it?" he said softly. "Wanna do it right now?"

"Yeah man," she said, slowly pulling off her rags. "Yeah, for sure I wanna do it."

She crouched there naked before him in the firelight, running a wet pink tongue over feral white teeth. "For sure I wanna do it right now."

Still reflexively holding on to the knife, Gonzo leaned forward across the dead dog and moved into her waiting arms. Then he felt the electric tingle of her hard little nipples against his chest, and they were rolling in each other's arms, biting and kissing, grabbing and ripping, moaning and grunting on the toilet floor.

Oblivious to his stink, oblivious to the ordure that was their bed, oblivious to everything but the knife in his right hand, Maria let him roll her over onto her back.

For nothing that was happening to her mattered, there was nothing in her world but that jagged piece of rusty steel and his hand pumping and squeezing it as he bucked and whined like a dog. Like a dead dog, like forty pounds of—

—he mewled in ecstasy as his body went rigid, then groaned in release as she bit down hard into the lobe of his ear—



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every muscle in his body let go! Including the muscles of the fingers holding the knife.

Gonzo's bones were on fire from the tip of his toes to the end of his nose as he floated upwards to the sky so sweet he could die soaring above himself like a bird that knew the Word and the Word was—

"Die! Die! Die!"

An incredible torch of flame seared into his ecstasy, pleasure and pain merging into a sensation so total that he couldn't even tell them apart until it lanced into his back again! And again! And again! And again!

Through a fading red mist he saw a demon face, a nightmare thing out of hell with bulging, rolling red eyes, and the slavering mouth of a beast, screaming, and snarling, and twisting orgasmically as pain and pleasure met on the razor-edge of his soul why why why—

Rage and orgasmic ecstasy merged into a red-hot convulsive stabbing fire and then Maria lay spent and panting with a dead weight atop her, her hand still clutching the knife, the knife still planted in flesh.

Snarling and spitting, she rolled the stiff off of her and then dragged and kicked it into the nearest crapper stall. Only then was her body wracked by the dry heaves, gagging and choking, but producing nothing but thin bitter bile.

After this had finally passed, she crouched naked on the filthy toilet floor for a long time, for an interminably long time, thinking nothing at all.

Then, gradually, very slowly, a sense of being, the ghost of a feeling, began to creep back into her body, and, after another long while, began to register in her whited-out brain.

This feeling, this dim sensation, was all that existed in her world. Weak, and vague, and formless at first, it sharpened and focused, and expanded to fill the vacuum of her being with itself. It became a deep, hollow, cramped pain emanating from the region of her belly.

It spread until her every cell was screaming an outraged demand. She felt depleted, spent, lost, and drained. She crouched there for another long period clutching the bloody knife, becoming and then being this awful throbbing void.

Then a further small measure of self-awareness returned. And she knew what this feeling was.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She was hungry.

She was very, very hungry. She was hunger. That's all that she was.

Numbly and hesitantly at first, she inserted the point of the knife into the belly of the dead dog. Methodically, she began to dress it out. By the time she had the carcass cut up, she was working with lustful abandon, grinning like a happy beast in her firelit cave.

Maria awoke slowly, deliciously, with a heavy languorous contentment in a belly fuller than she ever remembered it being.

But this did not prevent her from forcing down half a dozen big bites of succulent, crispy, well-charred haunch before stuffing the rest of her treasure into her street bag. Then she put her knife in the bag and pulled on a blood-and-crap-smeared remnant of what had once been her tunic. Shouldering the bag, she fumbled the pipe out from behind the doorknob and clutched it reassuringly as she opened the door and was blinded by the light.

It was the morning rush. Grand Central was jammed with hordes of empty faceless creatures hidden behind ludicrous masks, rushing in every direction. The station buzzed with the noise of their coming and going, with the babble of the stand owners and the rat-peddlers, the hawkers and the talkers, the gabblers and the screamers. Trains roared and clattered in and out of the station with a gut-rumbling vibration.

Dazed and blinking, Maria hesitantly moved through the rush hour crush towards the subway exit, perplexed but pleased at the way the crowds seemed to part to grant her easy passage. Even the muni cop guarding the street entrance seemed to fade back with a curl of his nose and a look of fear to let her by.

Then she was standing on the street in the bright morning sunlight. Towering buildings reached for the hazy sky. Armored taxis blared and clattered, carrying townies who thought they mattered. Townie clownies rushed to and fro. Streeties sidled by, giving her swag bag the eye, but one good glance seemed enough to make then crap in their pants.

She blinked like a mole emerging from her hole. With a little sigh, she wondered why there were tears in her eyes. Must be something in the air that made her cry. She had a knife for her life and plenty of meat in her poke. Wasn't everything else just a dumb plushie tushie joke? Screw all this lousy townie jive!

Considering the alternative, wasn't little Maria lucky to be alive? ●



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# ON BOOKS by Baird Searles

**Startide Rising**
By David Brin
Bantam, $3.50 (paper)

Don't expect to slide into David Brin's sensational second novel, *Startide Rising*, with any ease. The reader is dumped into a maelstrom of races and characters as well as a slam-bang situation, the causes of which are revealed in flashback. A ship from Earth lies on the sea bed of the oceanic, metal-rich world of Kithrup; the fleets of a dozen alien races search the immediate area of space for her, while carrying on titanic battles among themselves. And, due to the social order of this future of five (count-'em-five) inhabited galaxies, each of those races has client races which serve them. (It is the duty of older civilized cultures to find pre-sentient species and raise them, artificially if need be, to "sophont" status.)

In addition to this multigalactic Tower of Babel, the ship from Earth has at least three races represented, more if you count the smartass alien computer, the Niss, which has been smuggled aboard, and the incredibly ancient mummified alien discovered by the expedition in a lost and derilect fleet of moon-sized ships. This may be a representative of the Progenitors, who started the hand-me-down culture chain millennia ago, and then disappeared; it is this artifact which the aliens are searching and fighting for (it is *not* a peaceful and friendly pentaGalactic multiculture).

Then there are the pre-sentients as yet undiscovered on the long-abandoned world of Kithrup, and the possibility that some *other* race may be present there, since there are traces of intelligent life that don't jibe with the length of time Kithrup has lain fallow.

There are even more characters going than there are races. The Earth ship has 130 intelligent porpoises, seven humans, and one chimpanzee; porpoises and chimpanzees are humanity's client races, genetically enhanced for intelligence and being trained to create their own cultures.

And not only is the ship, *Streaker*, in imminent danger



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of capture by some pretty ugly customers, but there is mutiny brewing aboard based on racial prejudice among the porpoises, who represent several different cetacean species.

And all *that* is just for openers. Brin develops the situation at pell-mell pace; *Startide Rising* has enough in it for any three novels. He leaps from character to character, race to race, ship to ship, situation to situation in short chapters (some less than a page long).

And yet, for the most part, it's under control. Some of the battles and chases and treks afield in the seas of Kithrup may go on too long, and the rhythm of the novel badly needs a few spaces for the characters and the reader to catch their breath. It doesn't help, either, that the porpoises often communicate in *haiku*—poetry really isn't my field, but based on that qualified judgement, I don't think it's Mr. Brin's, either.

All that notwithstanding, this is one hell of a novel. Brin's first, *Sundiver*, has had a small but determined following since its publication some years ago. (It takes place in the same future.) The reason is evident from this second one; *Startide Rising* has what SF readers want these days, I think; intelligence, action, and an epic scale. It deserves to be a best-seller in the field, and if readers have an iota of sense, it will be.

**The War Against the Chtorr, Vol. 1: A Matter for Men**
By David Gerrold
Timescape, $16.50, $6.75 (paper)

A riddle.

What has:

*An inarticulate narrator, naive but capable, who starts every other sentence with "uh" and goes through a rite of passage learning discipline and the ways of the world.

*A rude but beautiful female military person who meets and treats our hero with scorn and delivers such lines as "Everybody's an asshole. Here, have a sandwich."

*A longwinded teacher of "Global Ethics," who says things like "The very best that (the government) can do is treat everybody equally unfairly" and to whose classes the narrator harks back in exquisite detail.

*An invasion of aliens that are absolutely merciless and with whom there is no communication whatsoever; the aliens are dubbed "worms" by beleaguered humanity, who can still not unite against them (giving the narrator more excuse to think back to his Global Ethics course).

*A squad leader named Duke with steely gray eyes who says little but teaches our narrator the meaning of duty.

If your answer is a vintage novel by Robert Heinlein that you don't remember reading,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you're wrong, but thank you anyhow. The point is made. Those are ingredients in David Gerrold's new book, that rejoices in the unwieldy title of *The War Against the Chtorr, Vol. I: A Matter for Men*, according to the cover of the bound galleys.

The question of imitation and influence is a sticky one through all the arts. Few, if any, creative artists are totally original, and sometimes the work of one can be indistinguishable from another's to all but the most educated perception (Ravel and Debussy, for instance). An *homage* can also stand in its own right, be enjoyed for its own sake, without knowing the original, and this is the case with *A Matter For Men*. The Heinleinian resemblance is startling, particularly to those who know Heinlein's earlier work well, but it's also a cracking good novel if you don't (or, come to think of it, even if you do).

It's a near future; America has undergone a humiliating political/quasi-military defeat which has totally changed the world's power base. Earth is then hit with a series of devastating plagues which eliminate a high percentage of its total population. Civilization remains, but with huge rents in its fabric; just as the various nations of the world are attempting to recover, nests of aliens are discovered in scattered portions of the now thinly-populated globe. They are vicious and look like two-ton pinkish-purple caterpillers (a nice touch); there seems no way to communicate with them. And what's worse, they are just the tip of the iceberg; other alien species, less spectacular, are found, making up a complete alien ecological food chain that seems well on its way to natural conquest.

Our young hero, Jim, is thrown into the middle of all this as one of the few left with biological training; he's attached to Special Forces and becomes part of the disunited attempts to find out what is going on.

As is obvious, there's lots of opportunity for social philosophizing here, and several characters take full advantage of it. Somehow, Gerrold gets away with it, as Heinlein used to do before it took over his writing completely. Other similarities include a wonderful talent for the unexpected, but terribly logical detail (don't look down when taking a leak while wearing an automatic helmet camera).

There are also differences. Jim, though naive, has a few more dimensions than his Heinleinian counterparts; the writing, generally, is lighter in some ways, more suspenseful in others. (I can remember few



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scenes anywhere as thoroughly hair-raising as the one here in which a captured worm is shown to an audience of unbelieving third-world representatives.) And this novel will run to four volumes, a length Heinlein never attempted back when he was telling stories.

David Gerrold has always been something of a chameleon, writing *Star Trek* novels with one hand and the poetic, too-little-known *Moonstar Odyssey* with the other. (I see I've metaphorically mixed him into an ambidextrous lizard—oh, well, you know what I mean.) But the Heinlein connection has always been there—his perversely tour-de-farcical *The Man Who Folded Himself* is a variation on a Heinlein theme, as is that Tribbles episode of *Star Trek*. It was a graceful touch to dedicate this new novel to Heinlein and his wife. And it's an early Christmas present to have a new, good novel of this particular sort, no matter who wrote it.

**An Unkindness of Ravens**
By Dee Morrison Meaney
Ace, $2.75 (paper)

It's A.D. 1011, in Wessex, Olde England. The Normans haven't arrived yet, but the Danes are moving in rapidly. However, you can still tell the olde Saxon inhabitants because their names are almost sure to begin with E, like Ealdgyth, Edmund, Eadwig, Emma, and Eadric. The king is, of course, Ethelred, called the Unready by his jaundiced subjects; not because he doesn't take the Boy Scout motto seriously but because he is prone to ill council.

This is the background of Dee Morrison Meaney's *An Unkindness of Ravens*; the "turbulent background," as book jackets are wont to say. The heroine is Branwyn, daughter of a Saxon country thegn, who senses that she is different from her family and countrymen. One wonders if it is because her name begins with B, but no. She has a Pictish grandmother. From lore learned from her in childhood, Branwyn has powers, of herbs and healing, but seemingly more. This potential is realized when an old man comes into her household who has also inherited the magic powers of the past; he teaches her communication with the beasts and birds, compulsion of others to her will, and the illusion of shape changing.

The adventures of Branwyn are followed as the Danes/Vikings attempt to conquer the Saxons and Ethelred gets Unreadier by the day. She naturally falls in love with a Viking chieftain; this chaotic affair, the division of loyalties, her magic powers which are regarded with suspicion by all parties concerned, and fending off the attentions of the King of the Ravens make for a turbu-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lent foreground. Not to mention the Goddess, whom Branwyn meets a couple of times, once in a magic wood, once at Stonehenge.

The historical fantasist has a double challenge, which Meaney hasn't really met here, though the novel is well-researched and the fantasy idea, though hardly original (survival of the "old magic" into a Christianized period), is a hardy perennial. There's also an unfortunate tendency toward the Georgette Heyer-type historical romance ("He kissed her, and their hearts echoed emotions building to an intensity they were still learning to control . . ."), which periodically turns the whole thing to mush. But as first novels go, it's hard to be unkind to *An Unkindness of Ravens* since it does show a certain promise.

**Nebula Maker & Four Encounters**
By Olaf Stapledon
Dodd, Mead; $14.95, $7.95 (paper)

Olaf Stapledon's staggering trilogy, *Last and First Men, Last Men In London*, and *Star Maker*, was published in the 1930s as philosophical speculation in the tradition of Wells, *not* as SF. The second book is a view of Stapledon's time from a species of future man, but the first is a history of mankind through the next two billion years and the third a chronicle of the intelligent minds of the universe. Those two contained a host of entities and societies that outstripped in sophistication almost anything that the science fiction of the time had conceived (and still remain among the most extraordinary reading experiences in or out of the field—they are both in print).

So far as can be determined from the fairly sparse information provided, the newly-published *Nebula Maker* by Stapledon is a preliminary sketch (though quite complete in itself) for one of the major themes of *Star Maker*. It concerns the awakening and growth of the sentient nebulae of the Universe, and the culture which these floating stellar clouds achieve. In comparison to *Star Maker* it is naive, and inclines to the metaphysical and allegorical at the expense of narrative interest. (The *Four Encounters* are philosophical dialogues, not necessarily of interest to the SF reader.)

One wonders at the value of making public the unpublished work of an author (or any creative artist), work that is fragmentary or later transmuted into a greater whole. It's certainly of scholarly interest, but since the writer himself chose not to release it in that form, it could certainly be a disservice, too. Any one, for instance, read-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing *Nebula Maker* without having read any of Stapledon's completed works might well wonder why he's held in such awe.

**Uranian Worlds**
By Eric Garber & Lyn Paleo
G.K. Hall, $28.50

It may be coincidence or a sign of the times, but within the last few months there have come along at least half a dozen novels in which the villains are characterized by, among other things, unorthodoxy in sexual behavior, in a way obviously calculated to make this contribute to the negative feelings of the reader. (Needless to say, the opposite is not true—six heroes/heroines haven't appeared with leanings that would unnerve the likes of Anita Bryant.)

But as a counterbalance, there has appeared from a major publisher of reference books for libraries and universities an unusual and thoroughgoing work of scholarship called *Uranian Worlds*, by Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo. It is subtitled "a reader's guide to alternative sexuality in science fiction and fantasy," and is indeed that: a listing, by author, of a surprising number (over 500) of pieces of fiction of all lengths that deal to a greater or lesser degree with sexual and romantic matters beyond the fundamental male/female norm. An idea of what each story is about is given, as well as the handling of the sexual theme.

Even for those not directly concerned, the volume can make for interesting browsing; SF, in which until comparatively recently the hero didn't seem *that* interested in the heroine, much less any alternative, took a while to come to grips with the infinite possibilities of sex. But since Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which was the great door-opener (though certain trail blazers such as Ted Sturgeon should be cited), the field has done a good deal in exploring the physical and social possibilities.

There are two informative and heartfelt introductions, by Samuel R. Delany and Joanna Russ respectively, both of whose writings have at times elegantly broken a few taboos.

**Elric of Melniboné**
By Michael Moorcock
Berkley, $2.50 (paper)

What with comics, bad paperback novels, games, and even movies, the heroic fantasy hero has in the past decade become a hyperboring cliché, but there was a time not really that long ago when the only members of that brotherhood around were Conan (in his literary mode) and the laughing duo of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser—oh, yes, and a sister, Jirel of Joiry. Then, like a bolt of albino lightning from the blue, came Elric



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

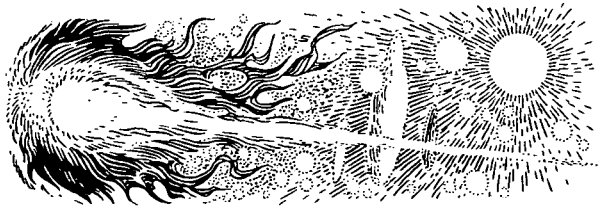
of Melniboné from the pen of the young Michael Moorcock. The floodgates were opened, but seldom if ever has the current crop equalled the glamor and excitement of that antihero. Now the Elric series is being republished—by the time this sees print all six will again be available—and even, if, at this point, you are reduced to a state of torpor by anyone waving a sword, the chances are good that Elric can make you believe in magic again.

No clodhopping barbarian, he, by the way. Elric is Sorcerer Emperor of Melniboné, the Dragon Isle, which ruled the world for ten thousand years; he is the four hundred and twenty-eighth of his line to sit on the Ruby Throne in Imrryr, the Dreaming City. An albino, constitutionally weak, he is dependent on drugs to survive; when he loses his empire, he ventures forth to the Young Kingdoms of humanity (the Melnibonéans are not *quite* human) and forms an alliance with the dreadful sword, Stormbringer, whose vampiric powers sustain and destroy him as they take part in the great war between the Lords of Law and Chaos.

It's pretty lush stuff, and Moorock plays it to the hilt. Though he went on to do a seemingly endless number of heroic fantasies with a myriad of heroes (all of which dovetail and to which only a three-dimensional grid could do justice), the initial creativity was poured into Elric, and his adventures remain the most glitteringly imaginative of the lot.

FYI, to clarify at least this area of the Moorcock canon, the Elric books are: *Elric of Melniboné* (first published as, and slightly changed from *The Dreaming City*); *A Sailor On the Seas of Fate; The Weird of the White Wolf; The Vanishing Tower* (aka *The Sleeping Sorceress*); *The Bane of the Black Sword*; and *Stormbringer*.

Books to be considered for review in this column should be submitted to Baird Searles, %The Science Fiction Shop, 56 8th Ave., New York, New York 10014. ●





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CLASSIFIED MARKET

ISAAC ASIMOV — published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $2.20 per word — payable in advance — ($44.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional.

### AGENTS WANTED

OPPORTUNITY awaits you now! Make hundreds working part time. No experience required. Send 50 cents to cover postage to: Helton Enterprises, P.O. Box 472906, Garland, Texas 75047.

### AUTHOR'S SERVICE

PUBLISHERS OUTLINE THEIR POETRY/FICTION NEEDS in information-packed publication. Free details. Markets, 4340 Coldfall Road, Dept 7, Richmond, B.C. V7C 1P8 Canada.

IDEAS for SF authors: $3 each, 5 for $10. Ideas sent once, no duplicates. Duplicate list 10 for $10. SASE with $1 for information. Ed's Ear, Idea File, P.O. Box 8086, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

### AVIATION

ANTIGRAVITY PROPULSION DEVICE! Free Brochure. RDA, Box 873, Concord, NC 28025.

### BOOKS & PERIODICALS

SF—Fantasy Magazines, Books (New and Used). 64 page catalog $1.00. Collections purchased. R. Madle, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, MD 20853.

60,000 Science Fiction and Mystery Paperbacks, Hardcovers, Magazines. Free Catalogs! Grant Thiessen, Box Z-86A, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

ANALOG, Asimov, Astounding, Galaxy, Weird Tales, etc. Free catalog of Back Issues. Overseas requests welcome. Ray Bowman, Box 5845A, Toledo, Ohio 43613.

WORLDWIDE MAIL ORDER, Vast stock of hardcover and paperback books, magazines. Fast efficient service. Ten year reputation. Four catalogues yearly: US/Can., free; all other $1.00. THE SCIENCE FICTION SHOP, 56 EIGHTH AVE., N.Y., N.Y. 10014.

SCIENCE FICTION paperbacks, hardcovers. Low prices. 1000's of titles. Free catalog. Lamira, Box 2862, Suite 37, Baltimore, Maryland 21225.

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMX, 84 Fifth Avenue, N.Y. 10011.

### BOOKS AND PERIODICALS—Cont'd

COMPUTER listings of paperbacks, science fiction, mysteries, westerns, magazines. Individually printed, always current. Send SASE. Riger, 3148 Holmes, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

NEW WORLDS FROM THE LOWLANDS: Fantasy and Science Fiction of Dutch and Flemish Writers—edited by Manuel van Loggem. "Excellent volume"—Preface by Isaac Asimov. $13.00 paper; $21.00 cloth (total).

DUTCH/AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL READING: New Worlds & Foundation's Edge—with van Loggem & Asimov; introduced by Gregory Rabassa. Video Cassette: $75.00. Order: Cross-Cultural Communications, 239 Wynsum Ave., Merrick, NY 11566.

### BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE *Book*—"2042 *Unique, Proven Enterprises.*" Fabulous "Little Knowns." How tiny projects made big money! Work home! Haylings-OP, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

TAKE PICTURES for profit. Be your own boss. No experience required. Free information. Write: Photomoney, 14589H West 32nd, Golden, CO 80401.

INTEREST Free money! No Collateral. No cosigners! No Credit Checks! Write Now for free details! Grants-DPC1283, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870-7298.

$1,000 Weekly Home Business Directory. Free Details. Name and address to: Box 1610-IA, Darien, Connecticut, 06820-1610.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

BECOME SELF-EMPLOYED, no experience necessary. GUARANTEED SUCCESS. No inventory to maintain. START IMMEDIATELY. We fill orders on thousands of WARRANTED items. Receive complete wholesale package, FREE 10 DAY EXAMINATION, $25.00 (Refundable). West Coast Associates Ltd., 13562 Vanowen, Suite 18, Van Nuys, CA 91405.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# PLACE CLASSIFIED

To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

### COMPUTERS & SOFTWARE

APPLE Computer text adventures. Only $9.95. Send $2.00 (refunded) for list. Ytrium, 242 W. Jeffrey Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090.

HAVE computer with 2 M byte disks, 64 k ram, very good printer, letter-address editor and forth. Also have interest in space development, sociology research training and plenty of time. NEED money. Best offers. A. E. Harley, 1206 W. Tomichi, Gunnison, Colorado 81230.

### EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors. Masters, Ph.D.'s...without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-IA-12, Tustin, CA 92680.

### GIFTS THAT PLEASE

GIFT Catalog! Send to S. Reing H. Teitelbaum, 1165 E. 54th St., P.O. Box 130 Ryder St. Sta., Brooklyn, NY 11234.

### GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

"GOVERNMENT SURPLUS" JEEPS $30.00! 5,000,000 Items! Complete information Your area. Largest OFFICIAL Directory. $3.00 (Guaranteed). SURPLUS (A583), 4620 Wisconsin Northwest, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016.

ARMY SURPLUS, many items. Pants $1.00, shirts $1.00, boots $10.00. Information $4.00, refund on first order. Lawton Surplus, Box 764, Lawton, OK 73501.

### HELP WANTED

SINCERE BOOK SALES AGENTS WANTED NOW part-time or full. Millions of potential buyers. Make big money fast. For FREE details write: J.M. LANIER CO., Rt. 2, Box 167d, Opp, AL 36467.

### HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

GREAT RADIO PROGRAMS—mystery, adventure, science-fiction. Free list cassettes. Rare Radio, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

### HYPNOTISM

FREE Catalog. Hypnotism, Hypnotic cassettes, sleep learning. Become the person you truly want to be. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

### LOANS BY MAIL

BORROW $30,000 without interest! All eligible. Repay anytime. Free details. Infohouse, 508-IA, 533 Sutter, San Francisco, CA 94102.

$LOANS$ ON SIGNATURE TO—$100,000! Any purpose. Details Free. ELITE, Box 206-DG, East Rockaway, New York 11518.

GET cash grants—from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, $2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

BORROW By Mail! Signature Loans, No Collateral! Many More Unique Services Available. Write! Free Details! MBG-DPC1283, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870-7298.

### MAILING LISTS

MAILING LISTS. 39 categories. Free information, E. Lobeck, 251 Sunset Avenue, Englewood, N.J. 07631.

### MAILORDER OPPORTUNITIES

SINCERE BOOK SALES AGENTS WANTED NOW! Part time or full. Do not confuse with usual worn-out offers. No experience needed. Full Details send $1.00 to: Neuco Publications, 815 LaBrea Ave. Suite 241-DP, Inglewood, California 90302.

### MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY...NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

### MISCELLANEOUS

OLDTIME radio programs. Suspense, drama, science fiction, comedies. Highly enjoyable tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Route One, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Classifed Continued

## MISCELLANEOUS—Cont'd

TERMPAPER catalog—306 pages—15,278 topics! Custom writing also available—all levels. Rush $2.00. RESEARCH, 11322 Idaho, #206AT, Los Angeles, 90025. (213) 477-8226.

## MODEL & MODEL SUPPLIES

ROBOTS! SPACESHIPS! From T.V. and movies. Imported model kits. Unavailable elsewhere. Catalog $1: Cosmic Connection, 426 Moody St., Waltham, MA 02154.

## MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

$60.00 per Hundred securing-stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped, self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

REDUCE home heating costs 55 ways. Big income circular included. Send $2.00 to: Perry, Box 3637, Springfield, Mass. 01101.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $2.25 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publication, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

GUARANTEED weekly income! Easy program mailing our circulars. Free supplies. Experience unnecessary. Start immediately. Write: Bond, Box 1147, Melbourne, FL 32901.

$750 WEEKLY POSSIBLE Mailing Circulars! Easy Guaranteed Income! No Experience Needed! Start Immediately! Free Details: PUBLICATIONS, Box 2096-D, Niagara Falls, NY 14301.

"EARN THOUSANDS"! GUARANTEED PROCESSING STAMPED ENVELOPES! SPECTACULAR HOME PROFITS! START IMMEDIATELY! FREE SUPPLIES! FREE DETAILS! WRITE: MJG-DPG, AMBLER, PA 19002.

## MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

PROFITABLE Multi-Level Opportunity with Yurika Foods. Be your own boss. Send for free details. LEV, Box 223, Clarkston, MI 48016.

CASH IN YOUR MAILBOX! For complete information about an amazing opportunity, send 25¢ and LSASE to: P.O. Box 651, San Jacinto, CA 92383-0651.

COULD you use $50,000? Will show you how. Write now for Free information. William Stack, 162 Front Street, Scituate, MA 02066.

FREE! Latest and Best spare time homeworkers moneymaking plans! Everything you need included! Servicex, Box 2029A #176, El Cajon, CA 92021.

CLOSEOUT JEWELRY. 55¢ Dozen. 25¢ gets catalog. ROUSSELS, 107-310 Dow, Arlington, MA 02174.

## OF INTEREST TO ALL

DEFY GRAVITY. Hand-held center of gravity illusion will fascinate all ages. Simple, make-it-yourself instructions $1. Ready made $2.95. Cheshire Company, ASF, Box 2219, West Springfield, Virginia 22152.

## PERSONAL

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP12, Tustin, CA 92680.

SINGLE? Meet that special person—anywhere! Very low fees. DATELINE, 316 Fifth Ave., New York 10001, (212) 889-3230 or (312) 523-2100 or (213) 854-0640.

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Hundreds of sincere members! All Ages! Free information! Write: Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

**YOU'LL MAKE MONEY**

**SAVE MONEY TOO— BY READING and ANSWERING THESE CLASSIFIED ADS**



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Classifed Continued

### PERSONAL—Cont'd

SOPHISTICATED SCANDINAVIANS, all ages, seek enlightened correspondence, friendship, marriage. Details: Scannaclub, Dept. CO3, POB 4, Pittsford, NY 14534.

FREE CATALOG! Credit, Divorce, Privacy, Tax, Employment problems? Our Books have solutions. Write: Eden, 11623 Slater, Box 8410-A, Fountain Valley, CA 92708.

LONELY? SINGLE? Meet nice singles by mail—Nationwide listing, descriptions, PHOTOS, addresses, complete only $6.00. KS-CO, Box 295D1, Latham, KS 67072.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE ZIP CODE; please use it when ordering merchandise from classified advertisments. You'll receive faster delivery.

ORIENTAL Ladies. Faithful, traditional, affectionate. Thousands seeking marriage, now! Cherry Blossoms, Box 1021DA, Honokaa, Hawaii 96727.

### PHOTOGRAPHY—PHOTO FINISHING

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!!! Make your own S & M Densitometer. Send $5.00 for detailed drawings and instructions. A must for successful photography in your darkroom. Order direct: S & M Instruments, Dept. IA12, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

### PRINTING, MIMEOGRAPHING & MULTIGRAPHING

MONEY Saving printing fast! Cards, Booklets, Envelopes, Letterheads, Circulars, Forms. 2 stamps brings catalog. Printing Call, Box 5144D, Rockford, IL 61125.

### RADIO & TELEVISION

CABLE TV DESCRAMBLERS and CONVERTERS, PLANS and PARTS. Build or buy. For information send $2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

### RADIO MYSTERIES

CBS Mystery Theatres—424 Hours on Cassettes, Reels or 8-Tracks. Superb Quality! Catalog $1.00. P.O. Box 3509-IA, Lakeland, FL 33802.

### RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11209.

### SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

### TOYS, GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT

WAR GAMERS Kings of the Boryian Empire, Play-by-Mail rules $3.00. Write: Paper Generals, P.O. Box 186, Dept. 'I', Carpentersville, Illinois 60110-0186.

### UNUSUAL BOOKS

THE INTELLIGENCE LIBRARY: Many unique books & official manuals on RESTRICTED subjects—Bugging, Wiretapping, Locksmithing, Covert Investigations, & MUCH MORE. Free brochures. MENTOR, DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354.

**PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR FICTION COMBINATIONS:**
**Mystery, Sci-Fi, or Special**

**OR TRY ONE OF OUR OTHER COMBINATIONS:**
**Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.**

**Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.**
**For further information write to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.**


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR

by Erwin S. Strauss

The December Doldrums in the con(vention) season are at hand, so here's a chance to look ahead to next year. Make plans now for social weekends with your favorite SF authors, editors, artists, and fellow fans. For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, and a sample of SF folksongs, send me an SASE (addressed, stamped #10 envelope) at 9850 Fairfax Sq. #232, Fairfax VA 22031. (703) 273–6111 is the hot line. If a machine answers, leave your area code and number. I'll call back on my nickel. Send a #10 SASE when writing cons. Look for me behind the iridescent Filthy Pierre badge at cons, playing a musical keyboard.

## NOVEMBER, 1983

25–27—**LosCon.** For info, write: **11513 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood CA 91601.** Or phone: **(213) 366–3827** (10 am to 10 pm only, not collect). Con will be held in: Pasadena, CA (if city omitted, same as in address). Guests will include: Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, "Fuzzy Pink" Niven. The LA SF Society's annual do, one of the major West Coast cons. Hilton Hotel.

25–27—**Darkover Council.** Radisson Hotel, Wilmington DE. Nancy Springer, M. Z. Bradley, Hal (Mission of Gravity) Clement, Katherine (Deryni) Kurtz, Hannah Shapero, Paul E. Zimmer, Mark Rogers, Diana Paxon, singers Clam Chowder. Also "1st Regional Mythopoeic Con."

## JANUARY, 1984

13–15—**ChattaCon, Box 921, Hixon TN 37343.** Chattanooga TN. Traditionally the year's first con.

13–15—**Brave New Con, c/o WACO, Box 5818, Bethesda MD 20814.** Fred ("Gateway") Pohl, Kelly Freas. Kicking off Orwell's year (yes, they know they named it after another author's work).

13–15—**EsoteriCon, c/o Pinzow, Box 290, Monsey NY 10952.** M. Z. (Darkover) Bradley, Katherine Kurtz, Jacqueline (Zeor) Lichtenberg. Emphasizing the esoteric arts (witchcraft, etc).

27–29—**ConFusion, Box 2144, Ann Arbor MI 48106.** Mike Resnick, Wilson Arthur (Bob) Tucker, Fred Pohl, Jack (Humanoids) Williamson, Joe (Forever War) Haldeman, Don (DAW) Wollheim, F. J. Ackerman, Stanley Schmidt, P. Eisenstein, M. Beck, Dick Smith. A classic Midwestern con.

27–29—**Corflu, 1827 Haight #8, San Francisco CA 94117.** Berkeley CA. Terry Carr is the toastmaster; the Guest of Honor will be chosen at the con. OGhu awards (takeoffs on the Hugo) will be presented. This one is for fanzine fans—come and see what old-time fandom was all about.

## FEBRUARY, 1984

3–5—**SFeraCon, Ivanicgradska 41A, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.** Bob (Slow Glass) Shaw. Free to non-Yugoslavs. SFera awards given. At the other end of the country from the Winter Olympics.

17–19—**Boskone, c/o NESFA, Box G, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139.** Gene (New Sun) Wolfe, D. Hartwell, artist Vincent DiFate.

## AUGUST, 1984

30-Sep. 3—**LACon 2, Box 8442, Van Nuys CA 91409.** Anaheim CA. 1984 WorldCon. Membership $40.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Isaac ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

## BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

If you have missed some issues, check off what you'd like and mail with your check or money order. Supplies are limited. Please allow four to six weeks for delivery.

- ☐ Apr. 13, 1981
- ☐ May 11, 1981
- ☐ Jun. 8, 1981
- ☐ Jul. 6, 1981
- ☐ Aug. 3, 1981
- ☐ Sep. 28, 1981
- ☐ Oct. 26, 1981
- ☐ Nov. 23, 1981
- ☐ Dec. 21, 1981
- ☐ Jan. 18, 1982
- ☐ Feb. 15, 1982
- ☐ Mar. 15, 1982
- ☐ Apr. 1982
- ☐ May 1982
- ☐ Jun. 1982
- ☐ Jul. 1982
- ☐ Aug. 1982
- ☐ Sep. 1982

*MAIL TO:* **ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE**
P.O. Box 999 • Ridgefield, N.J. 07657

Enclosed is my check or money order for $ _____ to cover _____ copies at $3.50 each. (price includes postage and handling.)

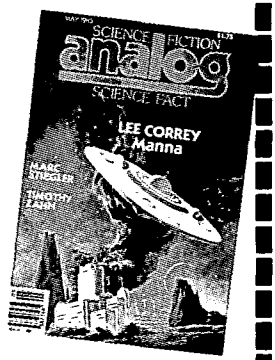
**name** _____

**street/no.** _____

**city** _____ **state** _____ **zip** _____

SCIENCE FICTION **analog** SCIENCE FACT

P.O. Box 1936
Marion, OH 43306




YES, Send me 12 issues for only $14.97. I save $6.03 off the regular newsstand price of $21.00.

☐ Bill me later, no need to send payment now.
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Check here if this is a renewal of your current subscription

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

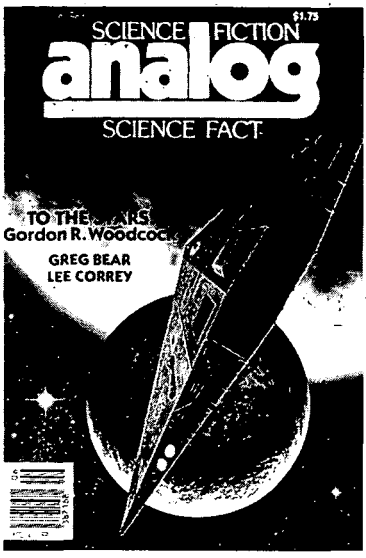
City _____

State _____ Zip _____

*Canadian orders add $3.00* (payment must accompany order)

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for your first issue. D3ND1


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




# SAVE 29% OFF THE COVER PRICE ONE YEAR ONLY $14.97!

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

**BUSINESS REPLY CARD**
First Class Permit No. 616 Marion, OH
*Postage Will be Paid by Addressee*

SCIENCE FICTION
analog
SCIENCE FACT
P.O. Box 1936
Marion, OH 43306

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED